February 6, 2023

First for women

So easy Valentine's treats

Super Bowl mmm

TIRED AND BLOATED?

NEWS! 50% of American women harbor bad gut bug *H. pylori.* Easy fix: The seed oil that gets rid of it better than an Rx!

STRESS CURE

Suzanne Somers: Her key to serene and healthy at age 76!

QUICK RELIEF

- ✓ Back pain
- ✓ Hot flashes
- ✓ Brain fog
- ✓ Blue mood

HEALTH FOOD SHOCKER

ALERT: An 'anti-nutrient' found in some veggies, nuts & seeds is slowing the thyroid, making it almost impossible for 85% of women over 50 to lose weight

Kick back & relax

100 lbs GONE!

Becky Pifer, 59, lost 101 lbs taking mini 'house walks.' It could work for you too!

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we put you FIRST

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with chocolate-kissed bites

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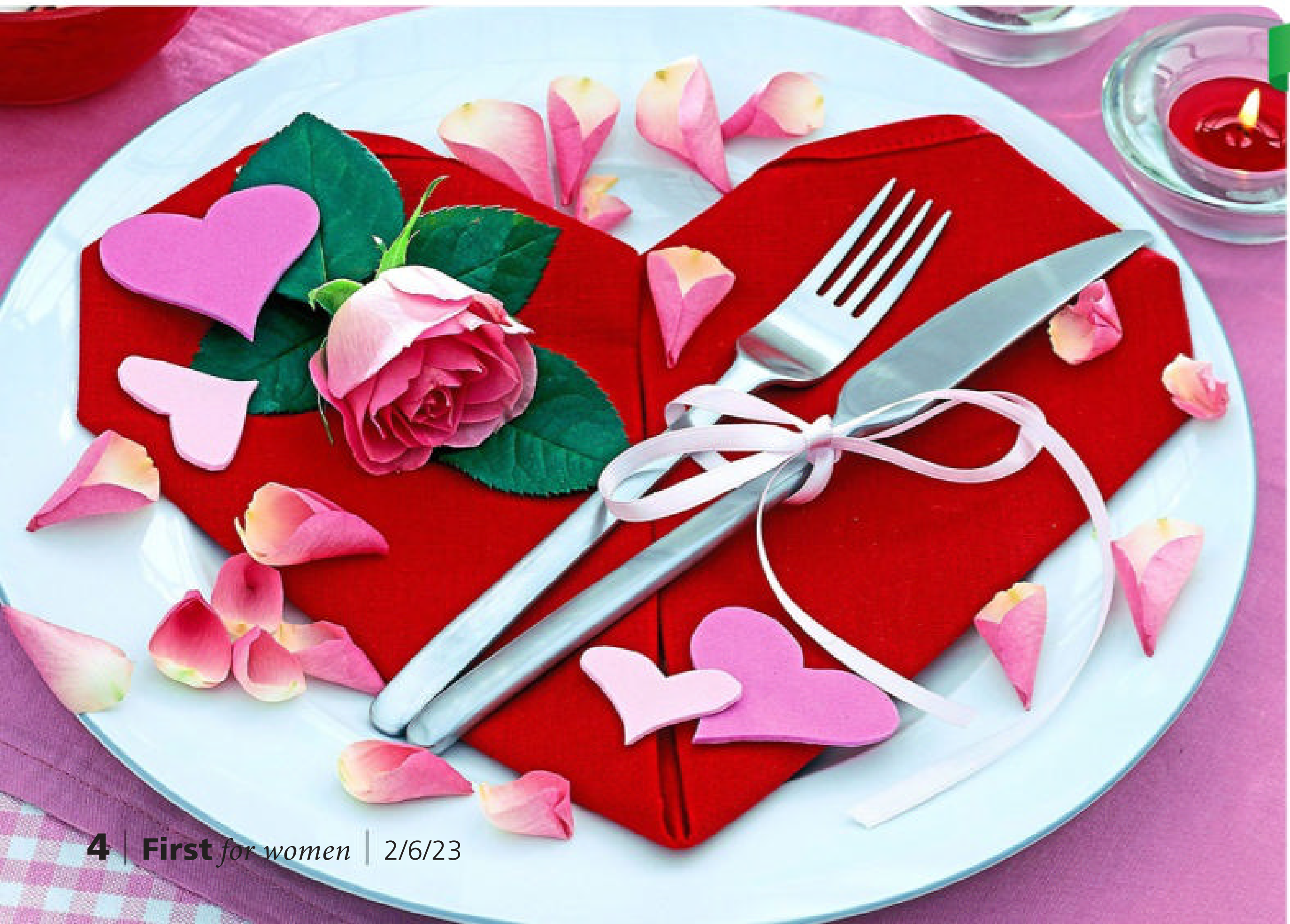
Bliss in every bite

Berry-kissed treats

"When hosting my annual Galentine's Day party, my strawberry milkshake cupcakes are always a hit," says Emily Boyette, FIRST Associate Food Editor. "The secret ingredient? Strawberry milk powder. To make: Combine 1 (15.25 oz.) pkg. of vanilla cake mix with 1 cup of buttermilk, ½ cup of oil, 3 eggs and ⅓ cup of Nesquik strawberry milk powder. Next, scoop into an 18-cup muffin tin lined with cupcake liners and bake at 350°F for 18 minutes. Meanwhile, beat 1 (16 oz.) can of cream cheese frosting with 2 Tbs. of strawberry milk powder and pipe onto cooled cupcakes, then top 'em with strawberries. These little treats are a cheery addition to any Valentine's Day get-together."

7 things making us happy

...that we just had to share with you!



Crafting up smiles

So-sweet settings

"My daughter Lucy and I love crafting together for every holiday," says Patty Bontekoe, FIRST Executive Editor. "For Valentine's Day, I'm hosting a small family dinner and we decided to make these pretty place settings. To do: We started with a red square cloth napkin, then visited CelebrateEveryDayWithMe.com and searched 'Heart Fold' for an easy step-by-step tutorial. To finish, we placed the napkin atop a plate, then added a bloom, petals, foam hearts and ribbon-tied utensils. They delighted all our guests!"

LINES+ANGLES (2); ADOBE STOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK (2); GETTY

“Only from the heart can you touch the sky”
—Rumi

Dazzling on a dime

Pretty posy cup

“The two things that perk up my midafternoon slumps: a hot cup of tea and fresh blooms,” says Lauren Blum, FIRST Associate Editor. “And this mug bouquet combines both. I simply pop six white and pink supermarket blooms in a water-filled teacup, fill gaps with greenery and place on a saucer to cheer up my desk.”

Genius find

Coffee lover’s best friend!

“I’m a huge coffee drinker, but during extra-busy days working from home, my mug turns cold before I can enjoy it,” sighs Melissa D’Agnese, FIRST Senior Editor. “To the rescue: this adorable mug warmer! Just pour a mug of coffee or tea and place on the heated coaster—it measures the weight of your liquid so it always heats to the exact perfect temperature!” (Lizhigu Cup Warmer, $28, Amazon.com)

Makeup we ❤

Luscious lips

“On special date nights with my husband, I love to play up my lips by adding a pop of color to them—like **Christine Baranski**,” says Lauren Stachiw, FIRST Beauty Director. “Lately, I’ve been loving using a tinted lip oil since they aren’t sticky and sink into skin to hydrate and plump my pout. And one in a bright raspberry hue enlivens my skin and brings out a radiant flush.” TRY: Catrice Cosmetics Powerfull 5 Glossy Lip Oil in 040 Raspberry Glow, $7, CatriceCosmetics.com

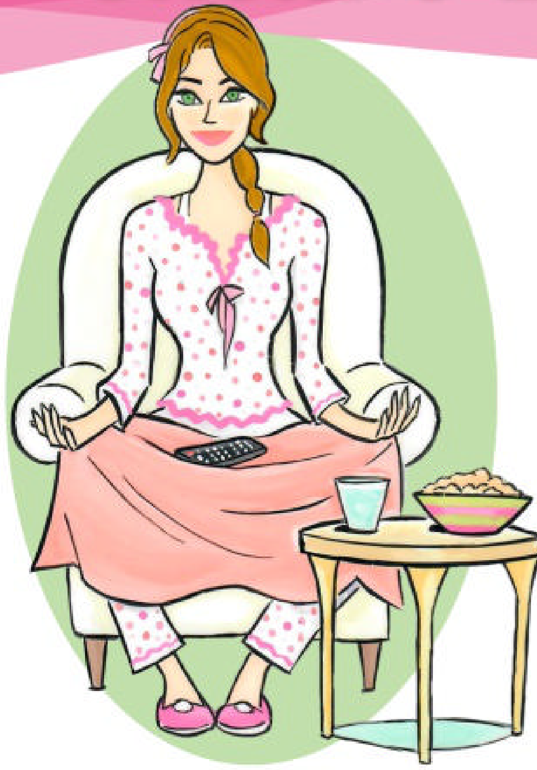
Phone-friendly: Snap a pic & share with a friend!

“The root of joy is gratefulness…it is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful”

—David Steindl-Rast

smart YOU solutions

Quick tips that keep you looking & feeling great



Easy move for better posture

Slouching over your phone day after day has taken a toll on your posture, leading to back pain and discomfort. The fix so easy that you can do it while watching TV? Sit straight up with your feet planted on the ground in front of you, then rest your hands on your thighs, palms facing up; hold for at least 10 minutes a day. This technique realigns shoulders and back muscles, reducing pain and improving posture.

QUICK POLL

How do you heal a raw, chapped nose?

Ouch! All that winter-cold nose-blowing has left your nostrils red and raw. Here, FIRST readers share their tricks for quick relief:

63% ❤ this idea!

Rub unscented lip balm on irritated spots, says Cara Knight. Its moisturizing ingredients soothe the area fast.

37% ❤ this idea!

Hold a brewed, cooled green tea bag on nostrils for 1 minute, says Ali Lee. Its antioxidants heal chafed skin.

This fixes a broken lipstick—fast

Argh! You dropped your go-to lipstick and it broke in half! Save it by first heating up the two broken ends with the pass of a lighter. Next, press the ends together and use a cotton swab to smooth out the line where they meet. Then place in the fridge to help it solidify, and voilà—good as new!

READER TIP

Soften a scratchy sweater

"I loved the new sweater I got on sale, but it was so itchy that it spent more time in my closet than out of it. Then my sister shared this trick: Fill a sink with tepid water and 1 Tbs. of hair conditioner; place the sweater in to soak. After 10 minutes, remove the sweater and let it air-dry. The conditioner softens the fibers the same way it softens hair. I tried it and now my sweater is so cozy!" *—Kimberly Mayhew, Springfield, IL*

MONEY SAVER

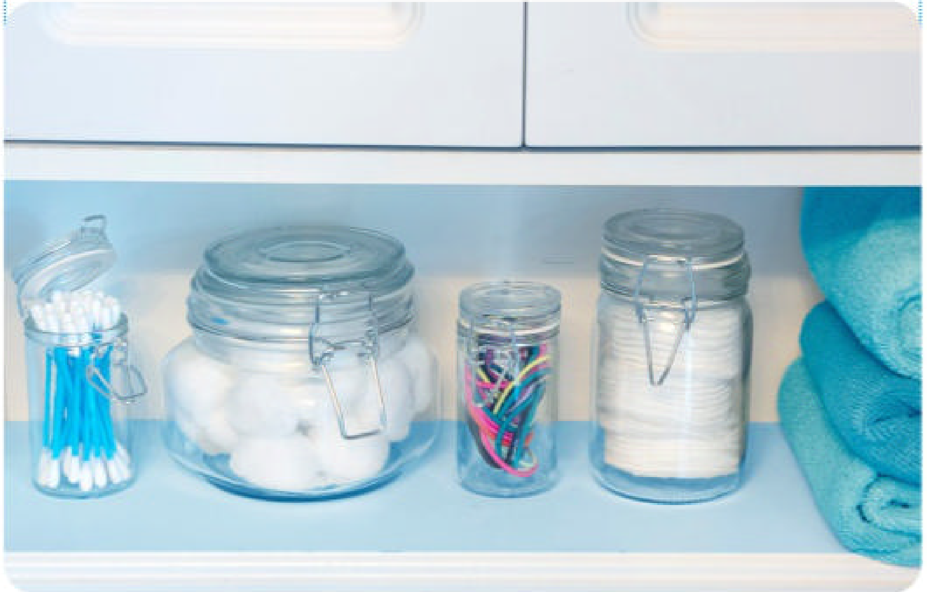
Sounder sleep *for less*

The next time you find yourself struggling to catch some all-important Zzzs, slip on a pair of warm, fuzzy socks! When toes are toasty, it signals the brain to boost the production of the sleep hormone *melatonin*. In fact, research shows that you'll fall asleep 15 minutes faster and sleep 32 minutes longer.

MONEY SAVED: $10 on melatonin supplements

SHOW-HOW

Old empty candle jars make perfect toiletry organizers



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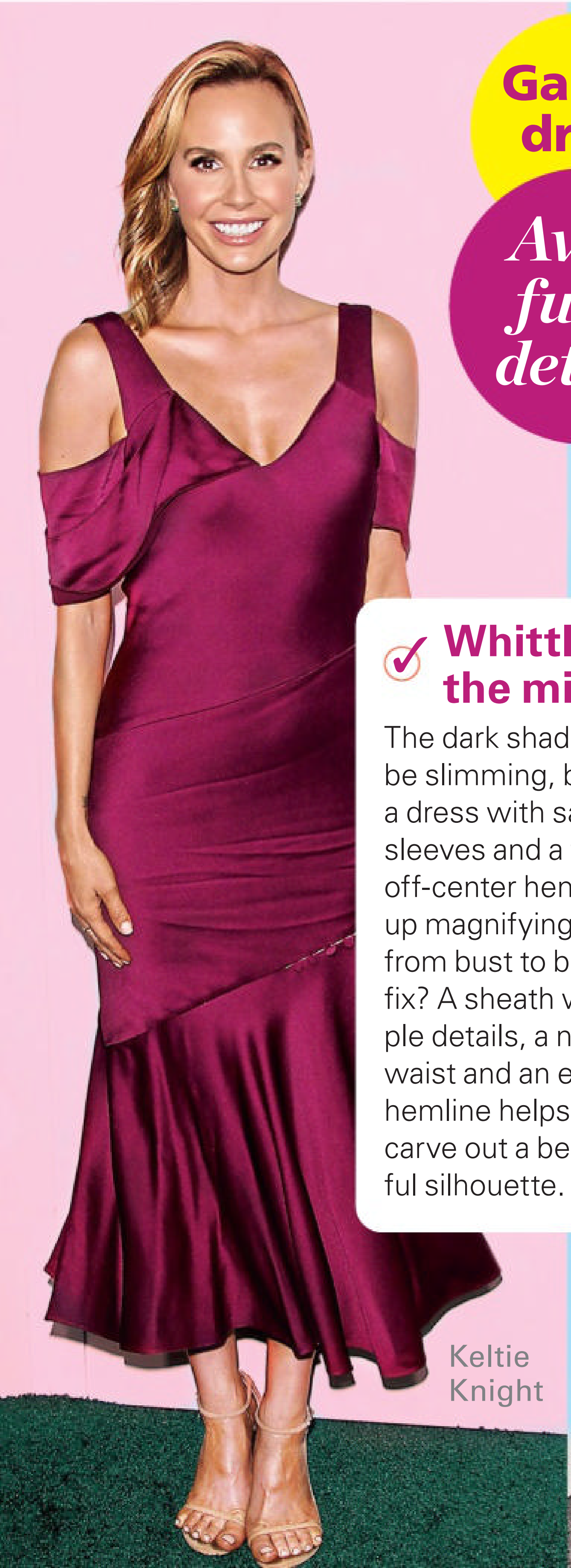
slimmer in seconds

JEWEL TONES

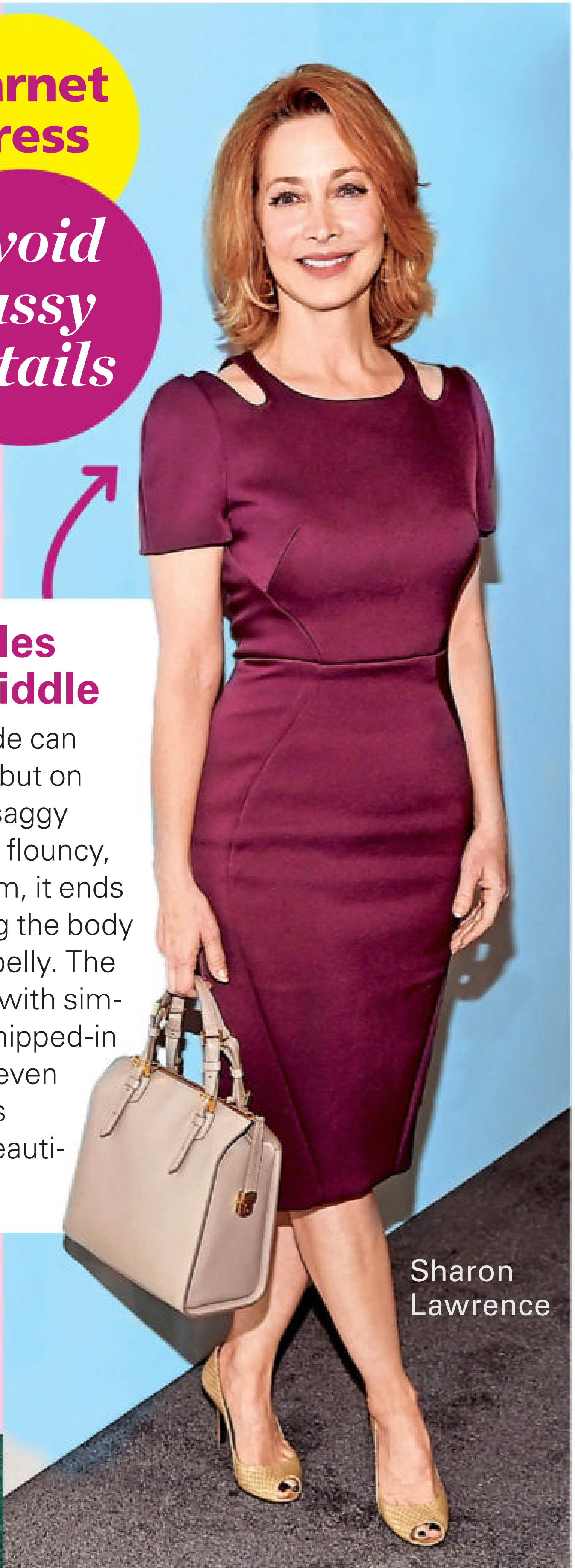
3 style secrets

Garnet dress

Avoid fussy details



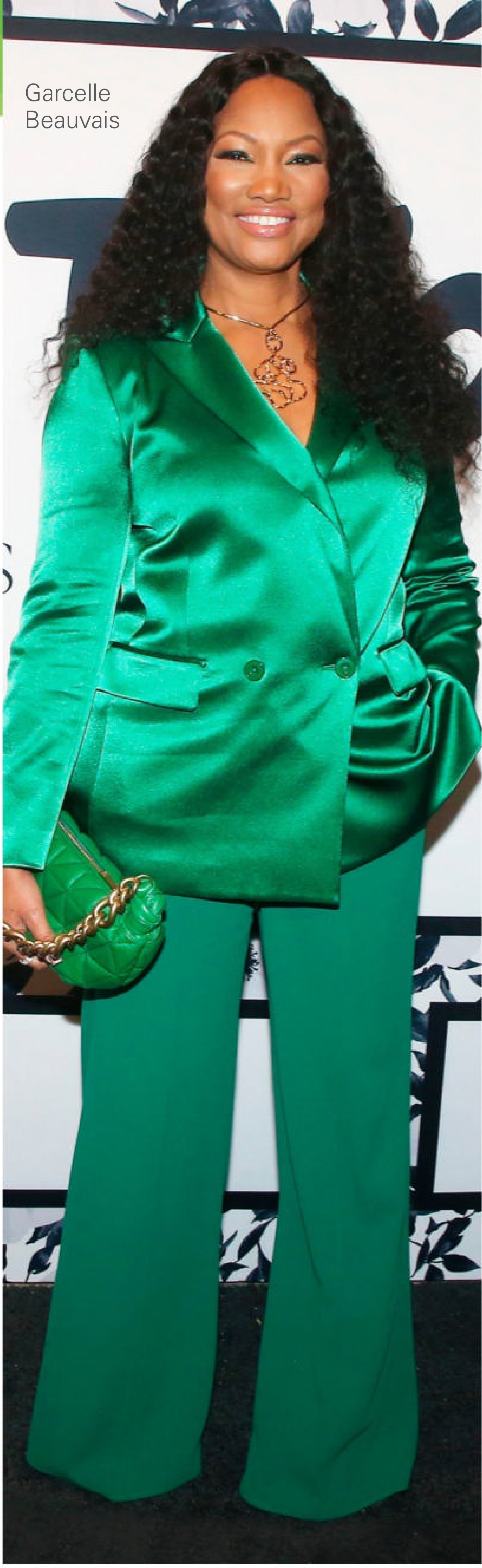
Keltie Knight



Sharon Lawrence

✓ Whittles the middle

The dark shade can be slimming, but on a dress with saggy sleeves and a flouncy, off-center hem, it ends up magnifying the body from bust to belly. The fix? A sheath with simple details, a nipped-in waist and an even hemline helps carve out a beautiful silhouette.



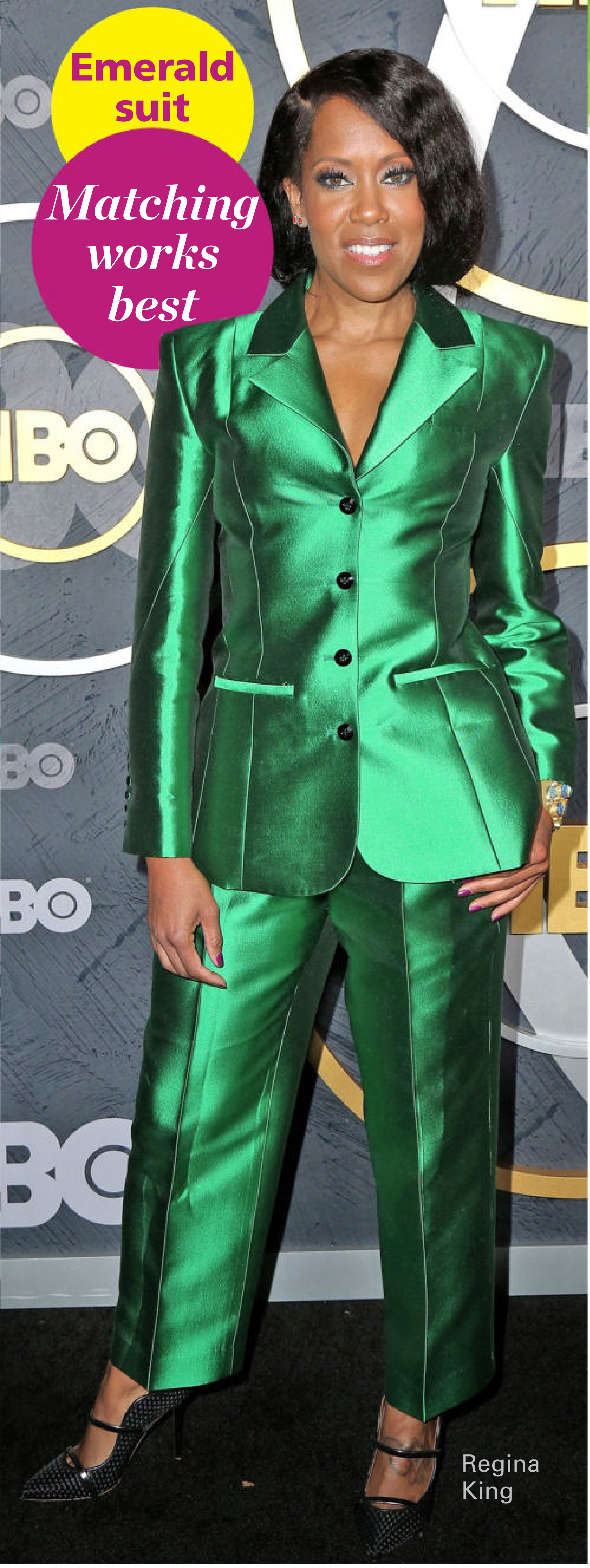
Garcelle Beauvais

✗ Adds bulk

Pairing a satin blazer with matte bottoms, when both are in a rich green hue, creates visual chaos that causes the eye to scan all over for a wider-looking figure.

Emerald suit

Matching works best



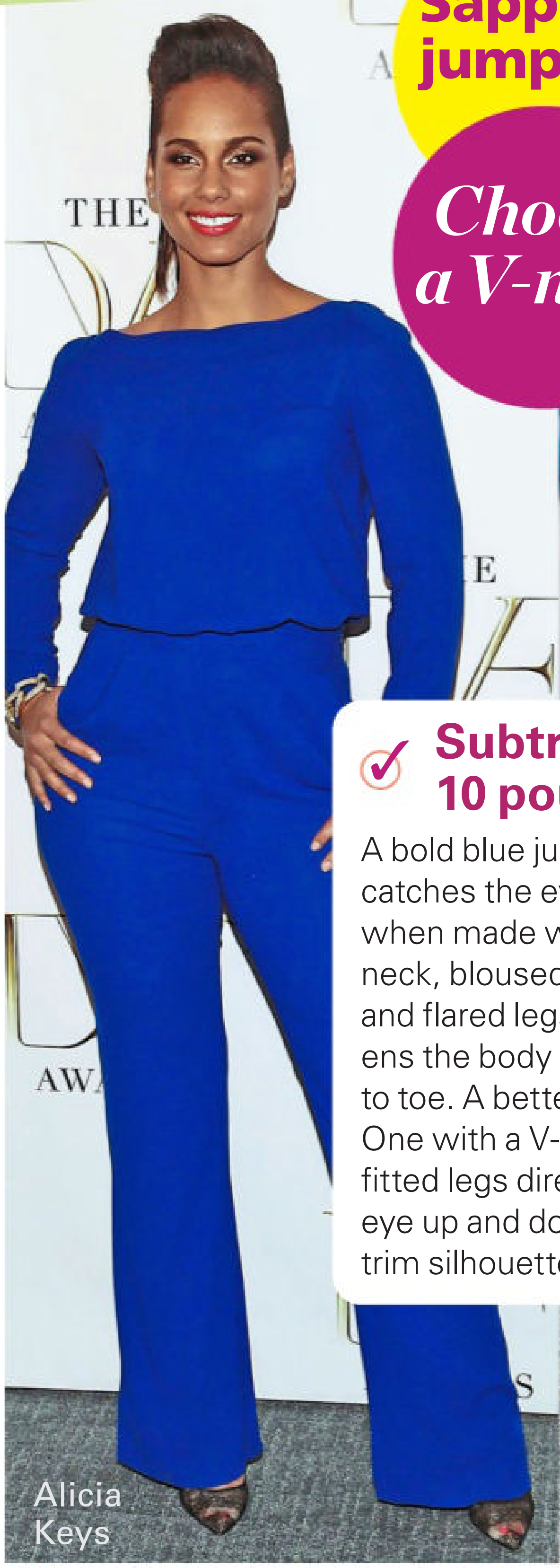
Regina King

Looks long and lean

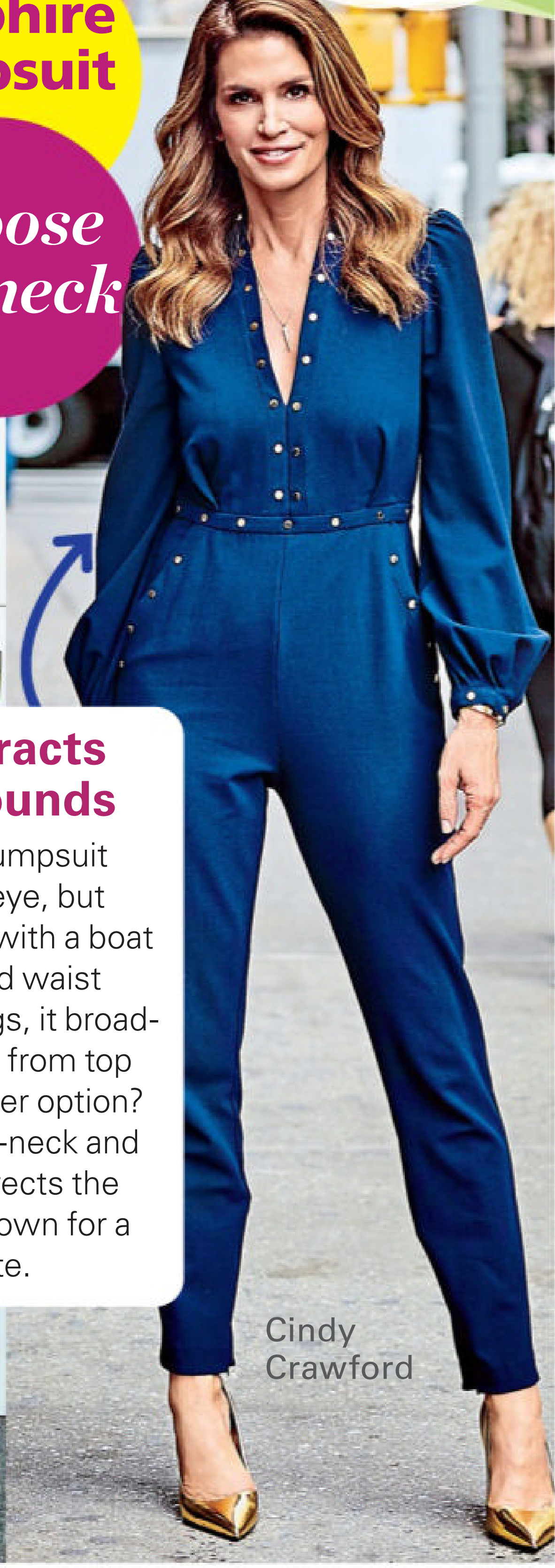
A coordinating emerald suit with vertical design features like a single row of buttons and linear creases creates a column effect that helps the figure look taller and trimmer.

Sapphire jumpsuit

Choose a V-neck



Alicia Keys



Cindy Crawford

Subtracts 10 pounds

A bold blue jumpsuit catches the eye, but when made with a boat neck, bloused waist and flared legs, it broadens the body from top to toe. A better option? One with a V-neck and fitted legs directs the eye up and down for a trim silhouette.

SPLASH (2); GETTY (2); BACKGRID; ZUMA. TEXT: MAGGIE DILLARD

FIRST PICKS

Calvin Klein, $80 (Amazon.com, Short Sleeve Sheath Dress)

Mango, $80 (Mango.com, Structured Suit Blazer)

Mango, $50 (Mango.com, Suit Slim-Fit Pants)

Shein, $23 (Shein.com, Notched Collar Double Breasted Jumpsuit)

Wow *in faux fur* toppers

Kate Middleton

A cossack hides forehead furrows

The furry, head-encircling hat is a fun, stylish way to conceal wrinkles across the brow, gray roots and any thinning along the hairline and temples. Plus, it helps protect the scalp from winter's skin- and hair-damaging elements.

One to try: Dikoaina, $17 (Amazon.com, Faux Fur Cossack in Raccoon)

Priyanka Chopra Jonas

Earmuffs lift features

Oversize earmuffs pull the eye up for the illusion of lifted cheeks and eyes. Bonus: White fur bounces light onto the face for a youthful, lit-from-within glow.

One to try: Avilego, $13 (Amazon.com, Winter Fleece Furry Ear Warmers Earmuffs)

Elle Macpherson

A trapper slims the face

Worn with the fuzzy flaps flipped upward, a trapper hat draws focus to the hat's top, visually stretching the face so it looks instantly leaner.

One to try: Eddie Bauer, $50 (EddieBauer.com, Truckee Faux Fur Trapper)

BACKGRID; SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY. TEXT: LAUREN BLUM

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March 7, 2022

First for women

St. Patrick's Day mmm...

TIRED NO MORE

NEWS! Most women who supplement with vitamin D are *still* deficient. The genius swap that ends tiredness + body aches

THICKER HAIR!

DIY herbal tonic dramatically increases hair growth by 35% —for pennies!

QUICK RELIEF

- ✓ Hot flashes
- ✓ Sinus pain
- ✓ GI upset
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Insomnia

BYE BYE REGRET

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Drop 18 lbs in 7 days

BREAKTHROUGH RESEARCH: 45% of women are genetically programmed to need MORE carbs to lose weight & feel their best

Crack *your* carb code in seconds with MD's secret—then harness the power of your DNA to lose without dieting

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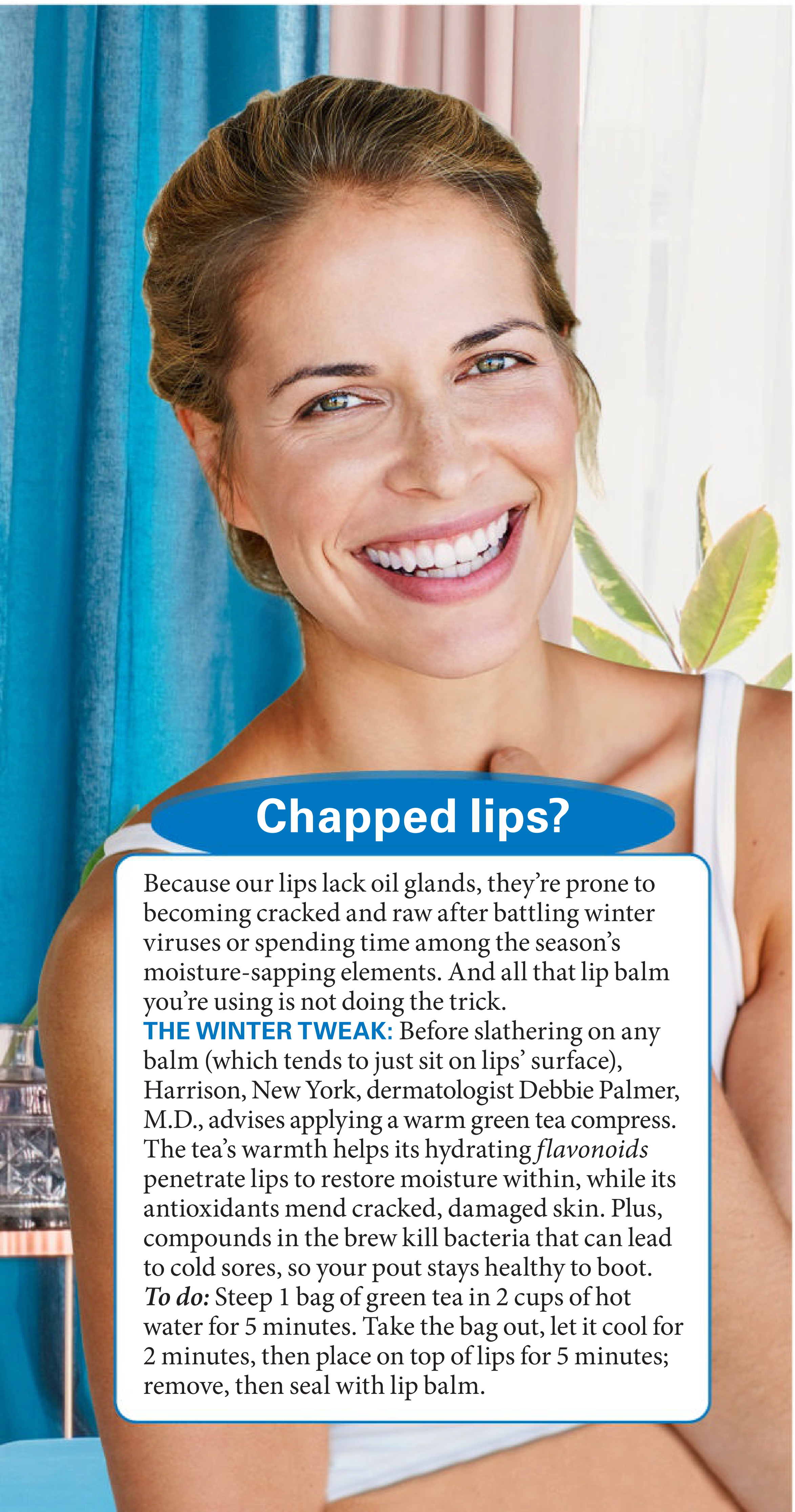
Winter-beautiful

We take the time to swap out jackets for coats and shoes for boots to protect our body from winter's frigid weather, but we don't always think to make similar adjustments to our beauty routine to combat the harsh effects the cold has on our looks. And as a result, come the coldest months of the year, we're overwhelmed with a plethora of beauty and aging *arghs*—from rosacea and eczema to fall-flat hair and wiry grays!

Here, top dermatologists share their easy, affordable skin- and hair-care tweaks that will leave you looking gorgeous all season long



Chapped lips?

Because our lips lack oil glands, they're prone to becoming cracked and raw after battling winter viruses or spending time among the season's moisture-sapping elements. And all that lip balm you're using is not doing the trick.

THE WINTER TWEAK: Before slathering on any balm (which tends to just sit on lips' surface), Harrison, New York, dermatologist Debbie Palmer, M.D., advises applying a warm green tea compress. The tea's warmth helps its hydrating *flavonoids* penetrate lips to restore moisture within, while its antioxidants mend cracked, damaged skin. Plus, compounds in the brew kill bacteria that can lead to cold sores, so your pout stays healthy to boot.

To do: Steep 1 bag of green tea in 2 cups of hot water for 5 minutes. Take the bag out, let it cool for 2 minutes, then place on top of lips for 5 minutes; remove, then seal with lip balm.

JUMP: SHUTTERSTOCK (2); GETTY. TEXT: LAUREN STACHIW

7 savvy ways to beat cold-weather beauty bothers

from head to toe

Dry, ashy skin?

Scaly, parched, skin-dulling patches are the inevitable "battle wounds" of a cold, dry winter. And while you likely already know that applying skin-care oils post-shower is optimal since that's when skin best absorbs hydrating nutrients, your skin is still super-dry!

THE WINTER TWEAK: Minnesota-based dermatologist Jenny Liu, M.D., suggests slathering the oil on *before* hopping into the shower as well! Since a hot shower can strip skin of moisture, a viscous oil creates a barrier that prevents any excessive water loss. It also reduces the chance of skin becoming inflamed or irritated by the water's warmer temperature.

To do: Rub 4 drops of olive oil (its fatty acids deeply penetrate skin to lock in moisture) onto dry skin before showering and apply another 4 drops onto skin immediately afterward.

Rosacea?

If you're like us, winter's harsh elements have you seeing red—literally! And while skin cream can help, it's no match for the whipping winds that strip skin of moisture and weaken its outermost layer, fueling rosacea flare-ups.

THE WINTER TWEAK: "Apply a layer of petroleum jelly to the face before going to bed," says New York City dermatologist Kenneth Mark, M.D. The jelly absorbs into skin overnight and forms an invisible shield over the face to prevent frigid temperatures and brisk winds from stripping skin's barrier. What's more, the *petrolatum* deeply moisturizes skin to help reduce redness.

To do: Apply a pea-size amount of petroleum jelly onto a clean, dry face at night. Tip: If you shower in the morning, apply another light layer of the jelly onto skin right afterward.

Fall-flat hair?

Argh! It feels like the second we step outside, the cold, dry, static-filled air finds a way to sap all of the volume that we spent precious time styling into our hair.

THE WINTER TWEAK: First, when washing hair, condition *before* shampooing. This helps strands get the hydration they need in the dry winter months, but allows shampoo to then rinse away any excess conditioning oils that can weigh hair down and leave it looking super-flat. Then, after hair has been styled, gently rub a dryer sheet over locks, says New York City dermatologist Jodi LoGerfo, D.N.P. Dryer sheets are loaded with particles containing positive ions that cancel out the negative ions in winter's static-filled air, which settle onto hair so it appears limp and lifeless. Plus, the sheet's surfactants and oils lightly coat hair to smooth out any pesky flyaways. Dr. LoGerfo's tip: Stash a few dryer sheets in a plastic baggie for touch-ups on the go.

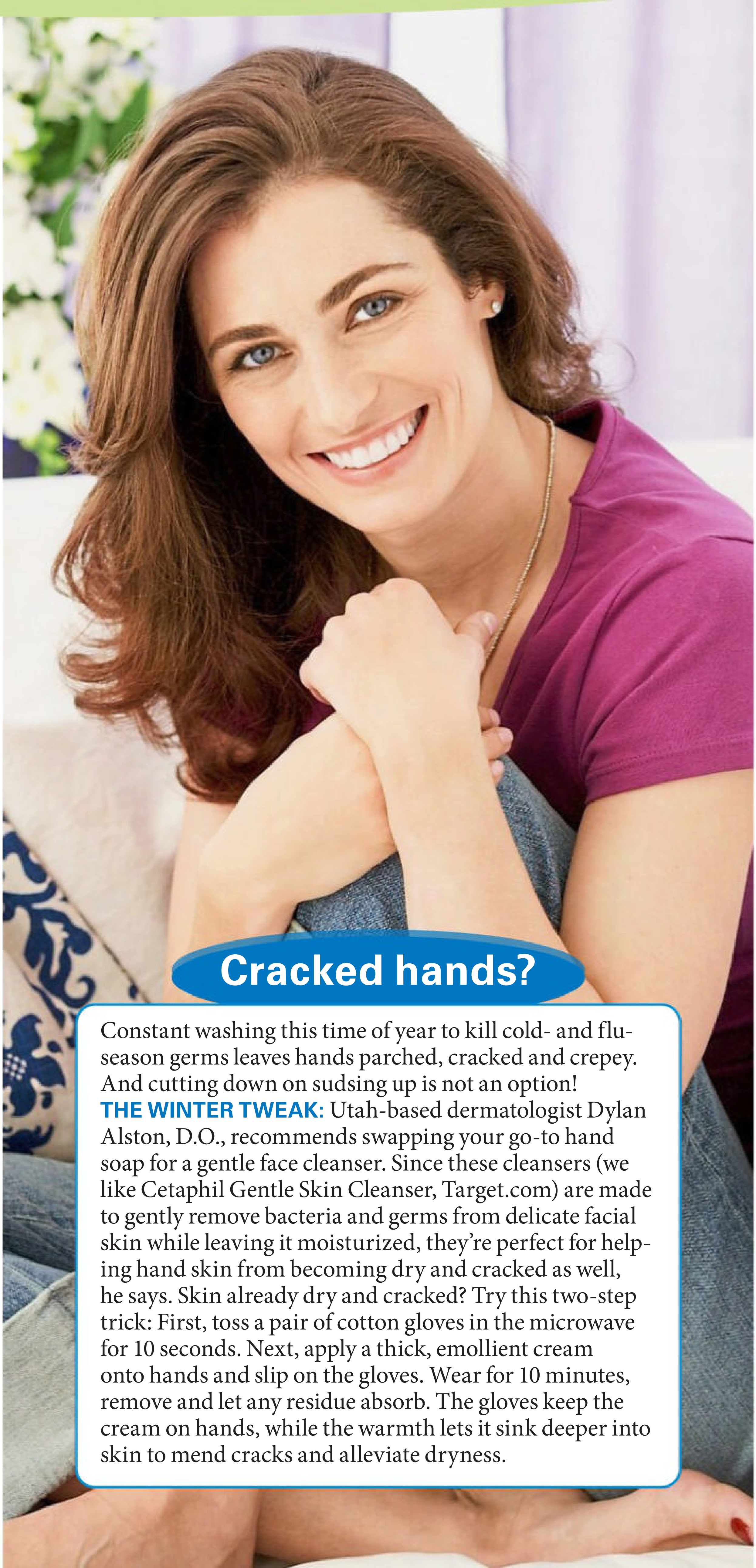
Wiry grays?

Whether you have a few gray strays or a full head of silvers, you already know that these hairs tend to feel coarser than their pigmented counterparts. Normally, a deep-conditioning treatment using coconut oil does the trick (the oil's hydrating combination of *lauric acid* and vitamin E helps grays look and feel smoother on the surface), but winter's moisture-depleting temperatures reverse any benefits.

THE WINTER TWEAK: Heat up the oil first, says Dr. LoGerfo. "The warmth opens hair's cuticle so oils can penetrate deeply into locks, maximizing and prolonging the beautifying benefits."

To do: Add 2 Tbs. of coconut oil into a heat-safe bowl and warm in the microwave for 30 seconds or until melted, then apply to damp or dry hair from roots to ends. Cover with a shower cap (this holds in heat and further helps hair-nourishing ingredients absorb into locks); let sit 15 minutes, then rinse. Repeat twice a month to maintain the strand-softening results.

ALEX BLIXA; SHUTTERSTOCK (2); BACKUP; STARTRAKS; GETTY (2)



Cracked hands?

Constant washing this time of year to kill cold- and flu-season germs leaves hands parched, cracked and crepey. And cutting down on sudsing up is not an option! **THE WINTER TWEAK:** Utah-based dermatologist Dylan Alston, D.O., recommends swapping your go-to hand soap for a gentle face cleanser. Since these cleansers (we like Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, Target.com) are made to gently remove bacteria and germs from delicate facial skin while leaving it moisturized, they're perfect for helping hand skin from becoming dry and cracked as well, he says. Skin already dry and cracked? Try this two-step trick: First, toss a pair of cotton gloves in the microwave for 10 seconds. Next, apply a thick, emollient cream onto hands and slip on the gloves. Wear for 10 minutes, remove and let any residue absorb. The gloves keep the cream on hands, while the warmth lets it sink deeper into skin to mend cracks and alleviate dryness.

The beauty bargains *stars swear by!*

You're not the only one who loves a good deal! These A-listers rely on inexpensive drugstore heroes to reverse their winter beauty woes

Jaclyn's shine booster

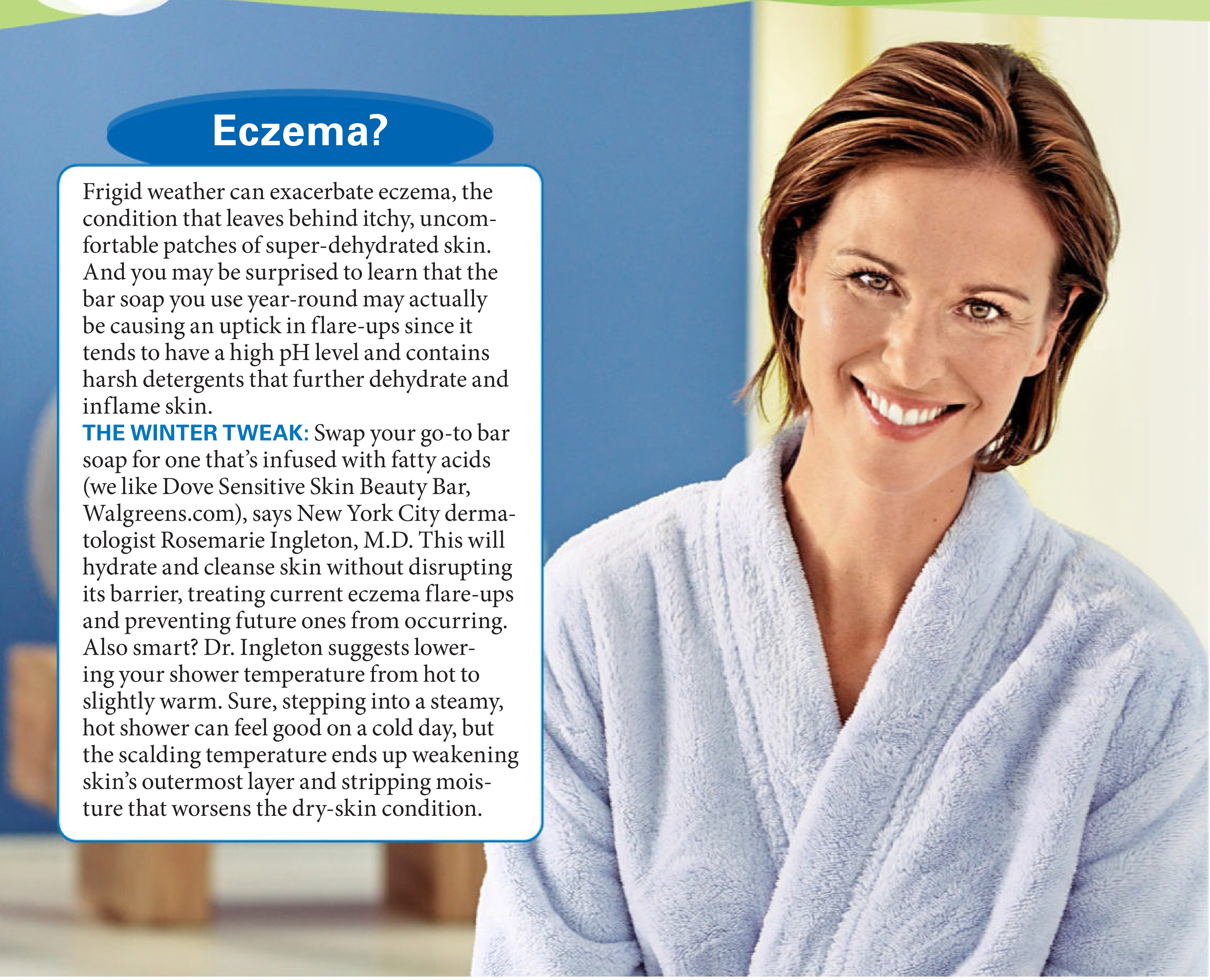
When her locks look dull and lifeless, **Jaclyn Smith** reaches for Queen Helene Cholesterol Conditioning Cream (Walmart.com). The cholesterol-infused treatment hydrates hair from the inside out and seals its cuticle for a youthful sheen.

Jennifer's skin brightener

The secret to **Jennifer Aniston**'s glowing complexion? She applies Aveeno Positively Radiant Moisturizing Night Cream (CVS.com) before bed every night. Its *niacinamide* (vitamin B-3) encourages cell turnover to reveal new, luminous layers of skin underneath.

Taraji's cuticle fixer

Taraji P. Henson massages Bio-Oil Skincare Oil (Walgreens.com) onto her cuticles nightly to help prevent painful, dryness-caused hangnails. The oil's blend of vitamins A (it repairs damaged skin) and E (it hydrates) absorb deeply into delicate cuticle skin, locking in moisture to keep cuticles from becoming rough and ragged.



Eczema?

Frigid weather can exacerbate eczema, the condition that leaves behind itchy, uncomfortable patches of super-dehydrated skin. And you may be surprised to learn that the bar soap you use year-round may actually be causing an uptick in flare-ups since it tends to have a high pH level and contains harsh detergents that further dehydrate and inflame skin.

THE WINTER TWEAK: Swap your go-to bar soap for one that's infused with fatty acids (we like Dove Sensitive Skin Beauty Bar, Walgreens.com), says New York City dermatologist Rosemarie Ingleton, M.D. This will hydrate and cleanse skin without disrupting its barrier, treating current eczema flare-ups and preventing future ones from occurring. Also smart? Dr. Ingleton suggests lowering your shower temperature from hot to slightly warm. Sure, stepping into a steamy, hot shower can feel good on a cold day, but the scalding temperature ends up weakening skin's outermost layer and stripping moisture that worsens the dry-skin condition.

ADOBE STOCK (2); SHUTTERSTOCK (3)

Soothing soaks *for fast healing*

Dealing with rashy skin, muscle aches or a stuffy nose? Cure the winter blues and bothers by infusing your bath with nutrient-filled oils. The result: a radiant, relaxed and rejuvenated you in 20 minutes or less!

To calm rashes: *Rose oil*

Anti-inflammatory properties in the oil penetrate skin to alleviate irritation quickly, while its astringent compounds constrict swollen capillaries to reduce redness. Bonus: Smelling rose oil's sweet floral aroma has been shown to increase the production of happiness-boosting *dopamine* to help stave off the winter blues.

Find it in: Lush Rose Jam Bubbleroon, LushUSA.com

To ease muscle aches: *Epsom salts & lavender oil*

The salts' magnesium and sulfates sink into skin to reduce inflammation and improve circulation so you'll feel less achy. And lavender oil's fragrance calms the mind to enhance relaxation.

Find them in: Dr Teal's Pure Epsom Salt Melatonin Sleep Soak with Essential Oil Blend, Walmart.com

+

To end congestion: *Mint & eucalyptus oils*

When inhaled, mint oil's active ingredient *menthol* and eucalyptus oil's *eucalyptol* work together to break up sinus and chest congestion and boost blood flow to speed healing. Plus, these antibacterial oils help kill lingering germs.

Find them in: A&G Pearl Bath Drops, WorldMarket.com

+

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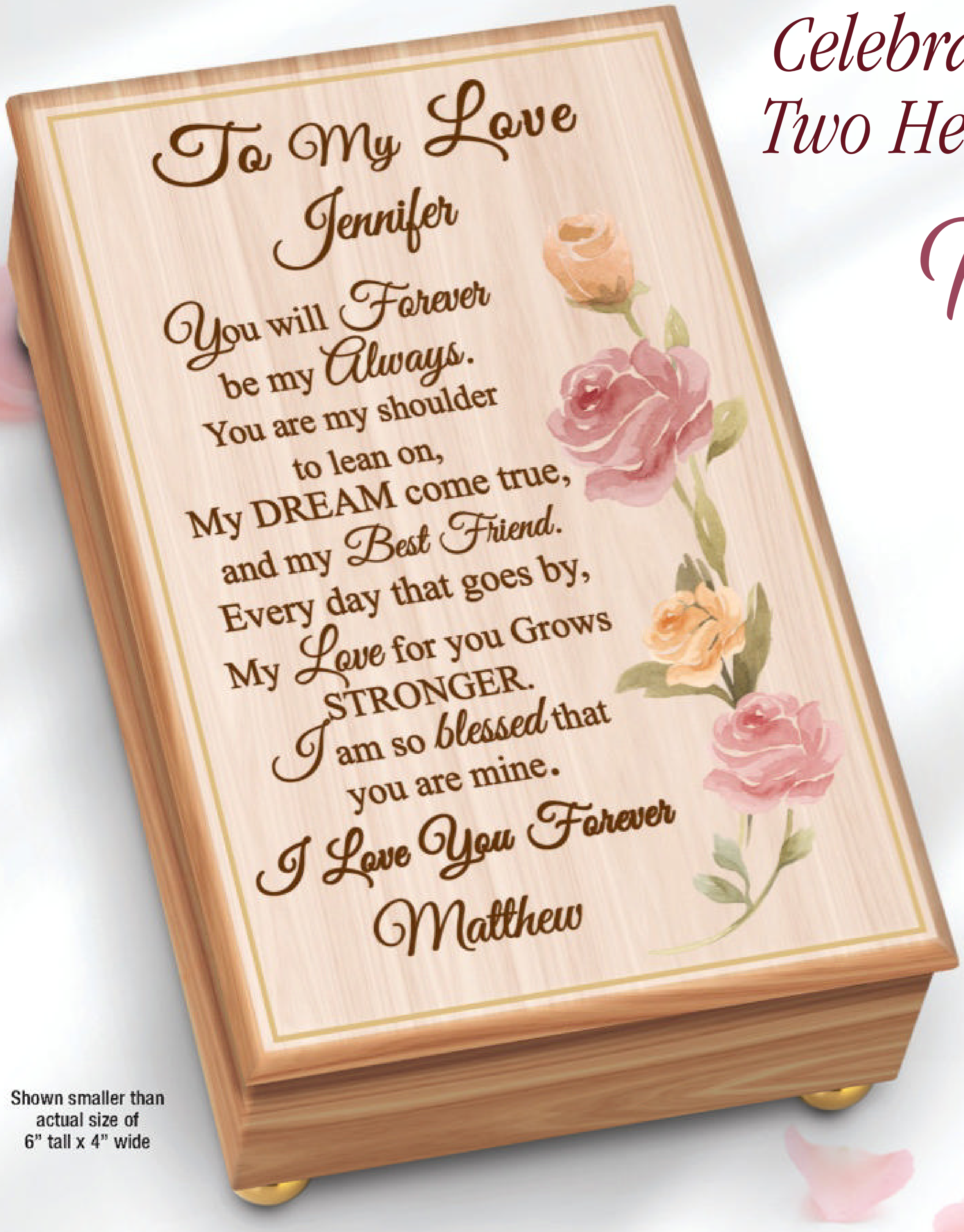
To My Love
Jennifer
You will Forever be my Always.
You are my shoulder to lean on,
My DREAM come true,
and my Best Friend.
Every day that goes by,
My Love for you Grows STRONGER.
I am so blessed that you are mine.
I Love You Forever
Matthew

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Creamy, dreamy

These warming delights are brimming with healthy coconut milk to help you effortlessly shed pounds

HOW COCONUT MILK **SUPERCHARGES WEIGHT LOSS**

+ Tamps down hunger

Drinking coconut milk can help keep you feeling full for 4 hours, according to British researchers. Credit goes to the sip's *medium-chain fatty acids* (MCFAs), which stimulate the output of appetite-suppressing hormones—an effect that helped study subjects eat 256 fewer calories daily than those who did not consume MCFAs.

+ Blasts belly fat

The rich stores of MCFAs in coconut milk prod the liver to burn more belly fat. The payoff: Investigators from New Zealand discovered that sipping about 10 oz. of coconut milk daily improved the liver's ability to burn fat by 50%.

+ Nourishes the thyroid

Coconut milk's MCFAs have been shown to stimulate the thyroid to produce more of a key fat-burning hormone called *thyroxine.* And a study from scientists at Italy's University of Naples revealed that consuming a meal with MCFAs speeds metabolism by 56% for up to 5 hours to help power off pounds without making any other dietary changes.

sips that slim

Caramel Coco Coffee Sipper

1½ cups brewed coffee
1 cup coconut milk
2 Tbs. sugar-free caramel sauce

Puree all ingredients with 1 cup ice and pour into 2 mugs. Garnish as desired.
Makes 2 servings

Per serving: Cal. 170 **Pro.** 0g **Carb.** 28g **Fiber** 0g **Sug.** 17g **Chol.** 0mg **Sod.** 85mg **Total fat:** 6g **Sat.** 3g

Bonus! Coffee cuts the risk of blood-sugar swings in half

Coconut Matcha Latte Marvel

2 cups coconut milk
2 Tbs. honey
1 Tbs. matcha powder
½ tsp. ground turmeric

Simmer 1½ cups milk and remaining ingredients until hot; divide between 2 mugs. Whisk remaining milk until frothy and spoon over drink.
Makes 2 servings

Per serving: Cal. 150 **Pro.** 4g **Carb.** 25g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 23g **Chol.** 0mg **Sod.** 45mg **Total fat:** 5g **Sat.** 5g

Bonus! Matcha sharpens focus by 133% for 2 hours

SHUTTERSTOCK (4). TEXT: KATE ARCELL

Coconut Milk Hot Chocolate

2 cups coconut milk
¼ cup cocoa powder
2 Tbs. coconut sugar
½ tsp. vanilla extract
¼ tsp. ground cinnamon

Simmer 1 cup milk and remaining ingredients until hot; divide between 2 mugs. Whisk remaining milk until frothy and spoon over drink.
Makes 2 servings

Per serving: Cal. 150 **Pro.** 3g **Carb.** 26g **Fiber** 4g **Sug.** 18g **Chol.** 0mg **Sod.** 50mg **Total fat:** 7g **Sat.** 6g

Bonus! Compounds in cocoa boost mood by up to 50%

Tasty way to reduce hot flashes by 88%

Just add ½ cup of soybeans daily to a plant-based diet, say scientists from the North American Menopause Society. In their study, postmenopausal women who typically suffered from two hot flashes a day reduced the number of moderate to severe episodes by 88%, on average, and 60% of subjects eliminated hot flashes. Credit goes to *phytoestrogens* in soy and other plants, which balance hormones and alleviate symptoms brought on by hormonal flux.

Sneaky cause of food poisoning

Research at New Jersey's Rutgers University reveals a surprising kitchen hot spot for foodborne illness: spice containers. When the scientists put harmless bacteria on ground turkey to monitor cross-contamination, then asked study subjects to prepare a turkey burger, they found 48% of the spice containers used while cooking were contaminated. The researchers say washing hands with hot water and soap after handling raw meat is key to avoiding the cross-contamination that can cause food-borne illness. Also smart: cleaning cutting boards and trash-can lids regularly.

Snack fix for GI troubles

Here's yet another reason to snack on almonds: Doing so can prevent pesky digestive troubles. That's the word from investigators at King's College London, who discovered that study subjects who ate about 45 almonds daily significantly increased their levels of *butyrate,* a fatty acid that nourishes healthy gut microbes to ward off inflammation and leaky gut syndrome, plus increases the absorption of healthy nutrients. The researchers credit the nuts' monounsaturated fats, fiber and potassium, all of which are proven to enhance digestion and heal the gut lining.

Vitamin K staves off memory loss

Enjoying a side salad with dinner may help keep your memory sharp. An international team of researchers reporting in the journal *Nature* found that vitamin K, abundant in leafy greens like spinach and kale, prevents neurons from breaking down, a process that can hinder communication in the brain and lead to Alzheimer's. The reason? Vitamin K is a powerful antioxidant that nourishes these cells to prevent their death. The recommended daily dose: 90 mcg. of vitamin K, equal to about 1 cup of raw spinach or kale.

Another win for tea lovers

Curling up with a cuppa can safeguard against diabetes, say researchers presenting to the European Association for the Study of Diabetes. Their study of more than 1 million volunteers found that drinking four or more cups of any tea daily notably reduced type 2 diabetes risk. The scientists say the *flavonoids* in tea improve insulin sensitivity to ward off the blood-sugar swings that lead to diabetes.

72% Number of people who say eating breakfast lifts their mood for the rest of the day

Source: Evolution Fresh

GETTY; SHUTTERSTOCK. TEXT: KATE ARCELL

Can a diet tweak heal recurrent UTIs?

Q: I've had a problem with recurrent urinary tract infections for months, and drinking cranberry juice doesn't seem to ward them off. Is there anything else I can try adding to my diet?

A: More than half of women will experience a urinary tract infection (UTI) at some point, and the risk increases with age as muscles in the bladder weaken and may not release all the urine in the bladder, allowing bacteria to grow. What's more, these infections are increasingly resistant to traditional treatment with antibiotics (by some estimates, up to 33% of UTIs are antibiotic-resistant).

While cranberry has long been touted for its ability to relieve UTIs, more recent research has found a natural remedy that appears to be even *more* effective: hibiscus tea. The noncaffeinated herbal brew contains a compound *(gossypetin)* that's been shown to prevent bacteria from sticking to bladder walls. In fact, a French study found that sipping a cup of hibiscus tea daily not only calms an existing UTI, it cuts the risk of future flare-ups by 77%.

Lucy's slimming breakfast swap

Lucy Liu, 54, likes to start her day with quinoa porridge instead of oatmeal. It's a smart move since quinoa contains more protein than oatmeal, keeping her full longer. To make it, simply combine ½ cup of cooked quinoa with 1 cup of almond or oat milk. Stir, adding nuts, fresh or dried fruit or a little maple syrup or vanilla extract for flavor, if desired.

SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY

Is there a nutritional fix for migraines?

Q: I suffer from chronic migraines, and a friend told me she heard that eating more fish might help. Is there any truth to this?

A: Yes! More than 4 million people suffer from chronic migraine, which means they experience pain 15 or more days each month, and women are especially prone to these debilitating headaches. But your friend is correct: Eating fish may help. In a study of 182 adults suffering from chronic migraine, investigators reporting in *The BMJ* found that those who replaced chicken and other sources of protein in their diet with fatty fish like salmon, tuna and trout experienced a 40% reduction in migraine frequency.

And you can boost that benefit by enjoying your fish with a side salad, roasted veggies or brown rice. The reason? Another study in the journal *Nutritional Neuroscience* found that people who consumed a heart-healthy diet that emphasizes produce, healthy fats and whole grains had 87% fewer migraines and 59% less pain when they did have one.

Q

All I want to do all winter long is eat! How can I stop these comfort food cravings?

A

The answer is an indulgent one: Enjoy a little dark chocolate. You've probably heard that this treat is full of good-for-you antioxidants and other healthy compounds, but it can also help cut cravings.

In one study, Danish researchers found that the dark variety, which is much lower in sugar than milk chocolate and boasts more healthy nutrients, decreased cravings for sweet, fatty or savory foods all day, and its high protein content is likely the reason why. In fact, subjects who consumed 3.5 oz. of dark chocolate reported feeling fuller and more satisfied, and ate an average of 550 fewer calories at a meal 2 hours later compared to those who didn't have the treat. Look for chocolate that's at least 70% cocoa (like Chocolove Strong Dark Chocolate) when you feel a craving coming on.

Put FIRST to work for *you!*

Nutrition experts Mira Calton, CN, and Jayson Calton, Ph.D., are leading authorities on nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. They are also the bestselling authors of *Rebuild Your Bones: The 12-Week Osteoporosis Protocol* (available at Amazon.com). To ask them a question, send an email to health@firstforwomen.com.

6 delicious SICKNESS STOPPERS

These superfoods speed healing from colds, flu & COVID

Wine **lowers inflammatory proteins**

Sipping 4 to 8 oz. of red or white wine daily can reduce your risk of catching bad colds—and developing complications like sinusitis and bronchitis—by 40%, say Spanish investigators. That's because wine compounds *(flavonoids)* dial down the production of symptom-triggering inflammatory proteins, plus stop viruses from sneaking their genetic material into nose and throat cells—an essential step in viral spread.

Berries **tame inflammation**

Frozen berries are readily available this time of year, and they make a yummy addition to muffins, pies, crumbles and other winter treats. More good news: New Zealand research suggests a daily 1-cup serving of sweet berries speeds recovery from colds, influenza and other viral ills by 40%. Credit *anthocyanins,* berry compounds that tamp down immunity-weakening inflammation.

Honey **halts germ spread**

Savoring 1 Tbs. of raw honey twice daily (either straight from the spoon or stirred into a warm drink) can ease throat soreness, scratchiness and other symptoms by 55%, trim two days off recovery time and tame even stubborn coughs as effectively as prescription medication, British research reveals. Thanks goes to raw honey's rich stores of plant enzymes and antioxidants, which coat and soothe irritated tissues and block germ spread in the throat.

Garlic **energizes virus fighters**

Dig into your favorite garlicky dishes when you're under the weather to cut the number of days you feel ill by 70%, Australian scientists say. How? Garlic boasts 85 unique sulfur compounds that energize virus-fighting dynamos called natural killer cells, plus stall the growth of drug-resistant bacteria.

Eggs **supercharge immune cells**

Enjoying two eggs daily could help you bounce back from colds and the flu 60% faster—plus shore up your protection against COVID-19, report researchers in the journal *Frontiers in Nutrition.* That's because eggs brim with *choline,* an often-overlooked nutrient that supercharges immune cells, helping them quickly find and destroy invading germs.

Sweet potatoes **strengthen lungs**

Sweet potatoes are chock-full of *carotenoids,* compounds that strengthen and heal the delicate mucous membranes lining the nose, sinuses and lungs, say scientists in the *British Journal of Pharmacology.* Enjoy ¾ cup of these spuds daily, and you'll halve risk of winter illness and recover 45% faster if you're feeling bad right now.

GETTY (2); SHUTTERSTOCK (3). TEXT: BRENDA KEARNS

Health food

85% of us consume too much of an 'anti-nutrient' found in certain veggies and nuts, disrupting our fat-burning glands. This Cornell-trained expert's easy plan reverses the damage and helps *quadruple* fat burning!

For those of us who have ever heard of *oxalates,* the so-called "anti-nutrients" in some plants that can block mineral absorption, it's likely in relation to kidney stones, which are caused by a buildup of oxalate crystals. But wellness insiders now say oxalates can affect our health—and even our weight—in countless other ways.

"Consuming too many oxalates can trigger pain and inflammation all over the body," says diet doctor Ken Berry, M.D., who experienced oxalate sensitivity after adopting a seemingly healthy diet. The sneaky condition is often called "the great pretender" since it can mimic everything from arthritis pain to rashes, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and anxiety.

In truth, everyone reacts differently to these plant chemicals that become toxic when consumed in amounts that exceed our individual capacity to process them. That's why Dr. Berry says, "Most people who are highly sensitive to oxalate intake have no idea it's causing their symptoms."

Up to 85% of women in the U.S. over age 50 probably have oxalate overload, contends Cornell University–trained nutrition expert Sally K. Norton, M.P.H., author of *Toxic Superfoods.*

OUTSMART OXALATE OVERLOAD AND HEAL YOUR THYROID!

Once oxalate crystals enter the bloodstream, they can hide anywhere, even in our master metabolism gland: the thyroid. Citing a Japanese study of 182 women, Sally K. Norton, M.P.H., confirms, "Older women have an 85% likelihood of oxalate crystals in their thyroid gland, disturbing thyroid function and body-weight regulation." Researchers found that the cells closest to these oxalates lost their ability to produce weight-regulating thyroid hormone, even in women without diagnosed thyroid disease. "These crystals can destroy the very machinery of life: cell membranes," says Norton. But there's good news too: "When oxalates leave the body, it's possible to heal tissues and reverse chronic conditions."

SHUTTERSTOCK (5). TEXT: LISA MAXBAUER.

shocker!

The older you are, the better this works!

Decades of ill health led Norton to scour libraries at med schools and the National Institutes of Health. She found studies showing oxalate crystals can build up anywhere—including our fat-burning liver, thyroid and adrenal glands. Animal studies show that oxalate ions can damage any cells they come near, shortening cell lifespan, hampering organ function and placing metabolic stress on the body. Norton says, "Oxalates can make a mess of our metabolism."

Oxalates also steal minerals from the food we eat, triggering nutrient shortfalls and cravings. While a mineral-deficient body can pack on fat, the opposite is also true: In one study, subjects who got enough of minerals like thyroid-supporting selenium lost 471% more body fat than those who didn't.

Women with poor gut health are most vulnerable to overload. That's a big group, as experts say 80% of us struggle with some degree of "leaky gut," a condition linked to a 56% increase in belly fat. Healthy gut cells limit oxalate absorption, but when the gut lining is damaged, by things like pesticides or NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen), toxins leak through the cell barrier and into the bloodstream, leaving damage in their wake.

Nutrition trends like plant-based eating, which contains healthy foods high in oxalates, have made oxalate overload more common in recent years. Norton adds, "When we pulverize our foods, turning them into nut milks or spinach smoothies, we break open hard-to-digest plant structures that might otherwise limit oxalate's effects." Her advice? "When conventional wisdom about healthy eating isn't working for you, look at oxalates."

The good news: Limiting oxalate intake allows our kidneys, which remove oxalates from the body, to recover from the toxic backlog. To do that, Norton suggests replacing the highest oxalate foods in your diet with near-identical swaps (see sidebar at right) for a month to see how your body responds. Hint: It will do so quickly and powerfully! "This is the easiest elimination diet in the world," promises Norton.

With fewer oxalates in the body, cells function better and gut health improves—a factor proven to speed fat loss by 250%! Women also report improvements in brain fog, cravings and digestion. Dr. Berry, who follows his own zero-oxalate plan, adds, "In the process of lowering your oxalates, you naturally lower your carb intake to promote fat loss."

Slimming is just the beginning. Within 10 days of swapping out high-oxalate foods, Norton felt relief from arthritis pain, restless sleep and bloat. She says, "For the first time in my life I felt good. As improvements continued, I felt like I was getting younger!"

She's not alone: After a half century of yo-yo-dieting, Marty Wilson lost 25 pounds and eased chronic joint pain. And Kelly Hogan lost 110 pounds and dramatically improved her IBS on a low-oxalate carnivore diet.

"There's no downside to a low-oxalate diet," assures weight-loss expert David Perlmutter, M.D. "It can be a health miracle." Ready to look and feel your best? Read on!

> **"There's no downside to a low-oxalate diet. It can be a health miracle"**
>
> *—David Perlmutter, M.D.*

3 EASY SWAPS
to fast-track your results

Reducing your intake of dietary oxalates is a surefire way to slim, but if you can't commit to a full plan, these swaps help usher in feel-good benefits

SKIP IT	PICK IT
 Spinach (630 mg. per 2 cups)	 **Romaine** (6 mg. per 2 cups)
Veggie burger (24 mg. per patty)	**Hamburger** (0 mg. per patty)
Barely ripe Avocado (50 mg.)	**Ripe avocado** (7 mg.)
Almonds (122 mg. per oz.)	**Pecans** (10 mg. per oz.)
 Raspberries (48 mg. per cup)	 **Apple** (4 mg. each)
Chia seeds (260 mg. per ¼ cup)	**Hemp hearts** (22 mg. per ¼ cup)
85% dark chocolate (140 mg. per 1.75 oz.)	**Cocoa powder** (80 mg. per 2 Tbs.)

See more of the foods highest and lowest in weight-disrupting oxalates on page 27

Turn to start slimming now

IT'S SO EASY!

Certain plant foods contain natural chemicals called *oxalates* that can become toxic when consumed regularly, causing symptoms like brain fog, joint pain and weight gain.

Not all healthy foods are healthy for every body, asserts nutrition expert Sally K. Norton, M.P.H. "I was floored to think that food in my healthy diet, like spinach, Swiss chard and sweet potatoes, had been making me sick." But they were. Now, she's spreading the word about oxalate overload, especially to older women since cells weakened by age or chronic inflammation run the greatest risk of oxalate accumulation—and pose the most potential for healing.

Ken Berry, M.D., adds, "By lowering your oxalates, you're going to get tremendous relief from inflammation quickly." One woman FIRST spoke to lost 38 pounds in a month.

On Norton's four-week plan, you'll practice oxalate-aware eating by limiting high-oxalate foods and opting for lower-oxalate alternatives (see chart at right). In general, meat, eggs, cheese and cabbage are low-oxalate, whereas some seeds, tree nuts and beans are higher in oxalates. But this approach isn't about perfection. Grandmother Marty Wilson, who dropped three pant sizes, shares, "I followed Sally's oxalate advice like a C+ student and still have seen so much progress. It makes it easier to lose weight!"

To see slimming results, follow this gentle step-down approach…

Week 1: Reduce oxalate consumption to less than 200 mg. per day (about 60 mg. per meal). Start by removing the top offenders, like spinach, beets and dark chocolate.

Weeks 2–4: Reduce oxalates to 100 mg. or fewer per day, with the goal of getting under 60 mg. daily (about 20 mg. per meal).

Week 5 and beyond: If you've reached your goal, experiment with adding back in some foods during maintenance mode. But know that healing can take time depending on your level of sensitivity. If symptoms return or weight rebounds, reduce oxalates by repeating the prior step.

Throughout the plan and beyond, use these tips to rev success…

✓ **Squeeze a lemon.** Start each day consuming citric acid in the form of ½ cup of undiluted (full-strength) lemon juice. Norton says, "It helps break down oxalate crystals."

✓ **Get calcium *this* way.** This mineral binds to oxalates, mopping up excess and protecting the kidneys from stones. Aim for a daily dose of 800 to 1,400 mg., depending on your dairy food intake. Look for a product *without* vitamin D, like Nature's Way Calcium Citrate 500 mg. (drugstores), to improve oxalate excretion.

✓ **Boil your broccoli.** To lower the oxalate content in raw broccoli, boil it for 10 minutes and discard the water. Norton explains, "This breaks down the cell structures so some oxalates can leach into the cooking water."

✓ **Enjoy a healing soak.** Some temporary detox symptoms like headache or fatigue can occur as oxalates are flushed from the body. Soaking in mineral-rich water can help, says Norton. To do, add ½ cup of Epsom salts to a basin of warm water and soak feet for 15 minutes every other day or add 2 cups to a bath twice a week.

Do YOU have oxalate overload?

At-home tests are available to test oxalate stores, but Norton says most of us don't need them. Instead, consider these signs: joint pain, GI distress, rashes, brain fog, slow recovery from injury or low bone density. But the most common sign is cloudy or gritty urine. "In the absence of a urinary tract infection, urine with a mirky, foggy-white look is likely filled with oxalates." If you experience these symptoms, try the tips above.

A SAMPLE DAY TO JUMP-START WEIGHT LOSS

Omelet Prepare a 3-egg omelet in butter, folding in 1 Tbs. grated cheese. Serve with arugula salad.

Cheeseburger Wrap two burger patties in Bibb lettuce. Top with cheese, mayo and red peppers.

Salmon Marinate a 4 oz. fillet in pear chutney and grill. Add 1 cup steamed cauliflower on the side.

Your quick guide to low-oxalate eating

LIMIT oxalate-rich foods

- Spinach (630 mg. per 2 cups)
- Rhubarb (541 mg. per ½ cup)

- Rice bran (281 mg. per cup)
- Dark chocolate (140 mg. per 1.75 oz.)
- Buckwheat groats (133 mg. per cup)
- Almonds (122 mg. per oz.)

- Miso soup (111 mg. per cup)

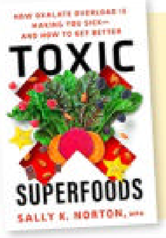
EAT nearly oxalate-free foods

- Peaches & nectarines

- Iceberg lettuce & alfalfa sprouts
- Mushrooms

- Meat and eggs
- Salmon and tuna
- Vanilla ice cream

- Butter
- Oat bran
- Flaxseed


HOW OXALATE OVERLOAD IS MAKING YOU SICK— AND HOW TO GET BETTER
TOXIC
SUPERFOODS
SALLY K. NORTON, MPH

Learn more in *Toxic Superfoods* by Sally K. Norton, M.P.H., Amazon.com

dessert

Yogurt parfait Stir 1 Tbs. white chocolate chips into 1 cup coconut yogurt. Top with strawberries.

SHUTTERSTOCK (7); ADOBE STOCK (2); JOEL BENJAMIN. H&M: JANEEN JONES

It worked for me

"I have more energy now than when I was 30!"

"I don't think this prescription is right," Debbie Levine questioned, trying on her new glasses. After some checking, the optometrist gasped, "Your vision has completely changed in a month. That could mean diabetes. Don't go home. Go straight to your doctor!"

That diabetes diagnosis wasn't Debbie's first health scare. Years earlier she developed a kidney condition and had been on medication ever since. She was ready for a health win.

After some research, Debbie started eating low-glycemic and low-oxalate foods like broccoli, fish and chicken, which were soothing for her kidneys and good for her blood-sugar levels. She ate every 2.5 hours and often relied on Optavia meals, which helped her limit her oxalate intake to less than 10 mg. daily. She also made sure to drink lots of water to flush her system. She found, "I didn't have cravings."

Debbie felt better and was thrilled when she dropped 5 pounds the first week. She thought, "I might actually be able to do this!" Within two months, her blood-sugar levels were already remarkably lower, stabilizing from the 200s to 130! And within five months, Debbie got off cholesterol meds and saw her diabetes A1C fall from 9.0 to a healthy 5.3. Now she doesn't dread doctor visits. "My kidneys are functioning normally for the first time since 1999!"

Debbie lost **62 lbs!**

NOW: **129 lbs**

Debbie Levine, 54, Chelmsford, MA

Height: 5'5"

THEN: **191 lbs**

Feel your best *in a flash!*

Outsmart winter health bothers with these healing scents

Chamomile **tames muscle pain**

If more time sitting and less outdoor fun have left you stiff and sore, soaking in a chamomile-scented bath (or massaging chamomile oil into sore spots) can put the spring back in your step in 15 minutes. Case Western Reserve University researchers found that chamomile's volatile oils pass easily through skin to tamp down tissue inflammation, relax tight muscles and calm pain nerves. To do: Add 10 drops of chamomile oil to shampoo and stir it into your bath, or mix 4 drops into 1 Tbs. of any carrier oil and massage into sore spots using slow, circular motions.

Bergamot **heightens happiness**

When gloomy weather leads to gloomy moods, breathing in the sweet, citrusy aroma of bergamot oil can boost cheer in 15 minutes, say scientists at Brigham Young University. How? Bergamot contains a compound *(beta-pinene)* that tamps down the body's release of energy-sapping stress hormones, plus increases the production of GABA, a brain hormone that fosters calm, happy energy. To experience the speedy mood-boost, simply enjoy a warm cup of bergamot-scented Earl Grey tea.

Mint **halts headaches**

The next time a thudding headache threatens to derail your day, reach for peppermint or spearmint essential oil. The mints' aromatic compounds (menthol and *menthone)* relax spasming neck and scalp muscles, improve oxygen-rich blood flow to the brain and calm overactive pain nerves, easing headaches as effectively as painkillers, say researchers reporting in the *International Journal of Preventive Medicine.* For speedy relief, mix four drops of either mint oil into a dollop of lotion and firmly massage into your neck, forehead and temples.

Basil **clears brain fog**

Inhaling the aroma of basil (fresh or dried) can nix winter fuzziness and improve focus, concentration and short-term memory by as much as 50% in 2 minutes, suggests research in the *Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Biomedicine.* Credit goes to basil's *1,8-cineole* and *methyl cinnamate,* compounds that prod the nervous system to release the focus-sharpening hormones *serotonin* and *noradrenaline.*

Pine **eases sinus congestion**

Dust mites, dander and other nasal irritants that build up in our homes double the risk of congestion and postnasal drip. A breathe-easy Rx: Add 3 drops of pine essential oil to 2 cups of hot (not boiling) water in a pot. Lean over the pot, drape a towel over your head and inhale the steam for 10 minutes once or twice daily until symptoms clear. Experts say pine oil compounds quickly open swollen sinuses and improve drainage.

Oranges **eliminate winter weariness**

If being holed up indoors has left you feeling sluggish, breathing in the aroma of oranges can quickly restore your sunny-day energy. Scientists reporting in the journal *Molecules* say orange oil's 26 aromatic compounds stimulate the sympathetic nervous system and increase glucose- and fat-burn in muscle tissue, doubling energy for almost 2 hours. To get the impressive perks, nibble on a few orange slices or take slow, deep sniffs of orange essential oil.

JUMPFOTO; ADOBE STOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK (3). TEXT: BRENDA KEARNS

quick bits

The health news that matters to *you*

Easy way to combat 'sitting disease'

Reading or doing puzzles as you sit can offset the negative effects of too much chair time, say scientists in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.* In a study of 145,000 seniors, those who did passive activities while sitting (like watching TV) were more likely to develop dementia, even if they were active other times of the day, than those engaged in brain-stimulating tasks. The researchers say passive activities reduce blood flow to the brain.

A win for short workout sessions

You gain more strength and muscle mass in quick daily workouts than in lengthy sweat sessions, say researchers in the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports.* They had volunteers use a heavy dumbbell to do bicep curls in various ways and found that those who did just six curls five days a week got stronger than those who did 30 curls one day a week. The study author says training a little bit every day allows results to accumulate without muscle regression. He advises starting with a 1-pound weight or water bottle, increasing the weight as it becomes easier.

Lasting relief for knee pain

For women suffering from painful knee osteoarthritis, doctors usually recommend surgery or medication (which comes with plenty of side effects). But a study published in the journal *Arthritis & Rheumatology* finds that *genicular nerve blocks,* anesthetics injected into the knee to prevent the nerves around the joint from sending pain messages to the brain, provide significant relief for up to three months with no side effects. The researchers suggest asking your orthopedic specialist if these shots, which are available at many pain treatment centers, are right for you.

Friends improve gut health

That's the word from investigators at the University of Oxford. In an animal study, they found that monkeys who were more social had fewer illness-triggering gut microbes and more beneficial immunity-boosting microbes. The study authors explain that having a strong support system reduces stress, which promotes better microbe diversity in the gut, a factor that improves immunity. They note that humans with a supportive social network would likely experience the same illness-protecting benefits.

Natural blood pressure Rx

People who practiced mindfulness meditation reduced their blood pressure by three times as much as those who used a home blood pressure monitor, received education on managing blood pressure and had access to a doctor, according to researchers at a meeting of the American Heart Association. The authors say mindfulness helps us stick to healthy lifestyle changes. To get the perks, check out the free mindfulness tutorial at YouTube.com/@calm.

6

The number of forgetful moments the average person has each week

Source: Natrol

SHUTTERSTOCK (2). TEXT: CYNTHIA DERMODY

Help for nighttime bathroom trips

Q: My doctor prescribed a diuretic for my blood pressure and said it would be most effective if I took it at bedtime. But ever since I started taking it, I wake up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom. What can I do?

A: This is a common problem with a simple solution. First, a little explanation: Prescription diuretics are used to treat high blood pressure because they help shuttle excess salt and fluids (which can raise your blood pressure) out of your body. But that process also fills your bladder, which is why you find yourself waking up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom.

For years, doctors have advised taking blood pressure–lowering medication at night, after a study found that doing so was most effective since it mimics the natural dip in blood pressure we experience overnight. But a recent study published in *The Lancet* found that dose timing had no impact on the medicine's ability to protect against heart attack, stroke and other circulatory diseases. That means you don't need to take the medication before bed. In fact, I recommend taking it in the morning to prevent the overnight 'gotta go' you've been experiencing.

Changing the time you take your medication should put a quick end to these sleep-disrupting bathroom visits. But if you still have the urge to go at night, try turning up the heat in your bedroom or snuggling under heavy blankets. Cold air stresses your central nervous system, which can lead to bladder spasms that wake you, but Japanese researchers found that bundling up (or turning up the heat in your house by about 5 degrees) reduced nighttime bathroom visits by 25%.

ADOBE STOCK

Relief from dry eye

Q: My eyes get painfully dry in the winter, and nothing seems to help. Are there any natural remedies worth trying?

A: There are! Instances of dry eye tend to spike at this time of year due to cold, dry winter air both outside and inside. Plus, estrogen and progesterone help keep tear ducts hydrated, so when those hormones drop with menopause, as many as 70% of women experience dry eye.

To combat the problem, I recommend adding a pinch of cinnamon to your daily cup of coffee. Researchers in the journal *Ophthalmology* discovered that caffeine increases tear production, and participants noticed an improvement in dry eye within 45 minutes of consuming caffeine. Plus, cinnamon is packed with antioxidants that calm tear-blocking inflammation to keep eyes hydrated.

Also smart: Consider adding foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids to your diet, like walnuts, flaxseeds and avocados. These healthy fats have been shown to increase eye lubrication, reducing the risk of dry eye by as much as 68%.

Q

I came down with my first cold of the year and I'm *so* achy. I've been taking it easy, but is there anything I can do to feel better faster?

A

Your aches are actually a good sign! When you catch a cold, your body releases chemicals that direct white blood cells to fight off the infection, which can cause inflammation that brings on aches.

You already know that staying hydrated and resting will speed healing, but I also advise supplementing with elderberry. The berry extract is well-known for fending off illness, but it also helps speed healing. That's because elderberry is packed with *anthocyanins,* compounds that prevent germs from infecting cells. In fact, scientists in the journal *Nutrients* found that taking 600 mg. of elderberry extract daily can reduce cold symptoms, including body aches, by 50%, plus help you recover two days faster than if you didn't supplement.

Put FIRST to work for *you!*

Heather Moday, M.D., is director of the Moday Center in Philadelphia. She is board-certified in allergy and immunology, as well as integrative and holistic medicine. You can follow her on Instagram (@theimmunitymd), where she shares information on health topics. And to ask her a question here, send an email to health@firstforwomen.com.

"I have never felt

For 14 years, Kate Romero battled fatigue, GI distress and breathing trouble—until she uncovered the surprising culprit and the natural remedy that made all the difference

"What do I have to do for you to listen to me?" Kate Romero, then 47, pleaded with her doctor in June of 2004. "For nearly 10 months, I had been dragging myself through my days, battling relentless fatigue that made staying awake and alert throughout the day nearly impossible," she recalls. "But that wasn't all: I coped with stomach pain, trouble breathing and unexplained weight loss.

Sick and tired

"My exhaustion had me hitting a slump every day by 3 PM, despite getting 9 hours of sleep. I always needed a nap, which helped just enough for me to get outside for a 15-minute walk with our dogs. And even though cooking for my family had always been a passion, many nights I had to choose between using what little energy I had for a heart-healthy walk or standing up to cook. My life became so limited, and social events were something *others* got to do, not me, because I was always too tired.

"Several times I pleaded with my doctor, begging him to do more than recommend over-the-counter medicine like Pepto-Bismol or tell me I needed to improve my sleep routine by avoiding caffeine before bedtime and managing stress, which I was already doing. The doctor reluctantly gave in and ordered blood tests that revealed that I was in a health crisis.

"On the way home from my blood test, the doctor called and insisted I go to the ER immediately for a blood transfusion to treat blood loss, likely due to internal bleeding. The ER doctor diagnosed me with a bleeding ulcer that required surgery. "A what?" I asked, as terror set in.

"In the hospital, I was told the likely culprit was a stomach infection caused by the bacteria *Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori),* which can be spread through kissing or contaminated food. I learned *H. pylori* bacteria invade the stomach, destroying the protective mucus layer and leaving you vulnerable to ulcers, or tiny sores on the stomach's lining. While you sleep, acid can escape the stomach through these ulcers and flow up into your esophagus, causing a sore throat and ruining your ability to get deep sleep. Suddenly, all the pieces fit together, and I understood why I'd been so tired and sick.

"But I spent the next 14 years trapped in a dizzying spiral of dragging myself through my days, barely functioning as I navigated

One-minute QUIZ

IS A SNEAKY GI INFECTION DRAINING *YOUR* ENERGY?

If you experience fatigue and at least two of these symptoms, *H. pylori* may be to blame

- ✓ Bloat/burping
- ✓ Heartburn
- ✓ Stomach pain
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Skin rashes
- ✓ Ulcers

Kate Romero, 65, Los Angeles

more alive!”

12 attempts to eradicate the infection with antibiotics. My doctor prescribed weeks—or months—of powerful antibiotics he hoped would clear up the infection, followed by endoscopies and biopsies to check for lingering presence of *H. pylori.*

“Year after year, my hopes of being free of the infection were dashed when tests indicated my gut still wasn’t healthy. As a result, I was still always tired while also battling stomach pain and weakness. Over time, I would often feel faint, and then I started having trouble breathing and I could hear my heartbeat in my ears.

Energy restored!

“I found myself at my wit’s end because nothing could get rid of the infection. Finally, I decided to take matters into my own hands and researched homeopathic remedies. I discovered that black seed oil, which is extracted from seeds of a black cumin shrub, has powerful antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties that treat *H. pylori* without the side effects of antibiotics. Reading studies about black seed’s ability to help heal the infection and the gut in general, I started feeling optimistic that I might actually get off the carousel of taking prescriptions that never cleared up my infection or helped me reclaim my energy so I could stop head-bobbing my way through life.

“Finding no reason *not* to give it a try, I opted to make my own black seed capsules to ensure the purity of what I was taking. (Premade capsules are available online or at drugstores.) I ordered a 4-pound tub of black seed, along with empty gel capsules. Excited at the chance to regain my health, I started filling the capsules the day they arrived.

“Within weeks of taking one capsule every morning, I was thrilled that I was able to stay awake past 7 PM and wasn’t yawning as much throughout the day. My digestive symptoms also started to subside. And when I went for a follow-up endoscopy about six months later, my doctor and I were thrilled that my battle with *H. pylori* was over when the biopsy came back negative.

“My black seed self-care was extremely cost-effective, and the easy remedy gave me my life back. I can honestly say that I’ve never felt more energized or alive!”

—As told to Gina Roberts-Grey

Read *this* if you have high blood pressure

If the quiz at left suggests you may be suffering from an *H. pylori* infection and you have high blood pressure, ask your doctor to test for the bug. If tests confirm an infection, you could make a huge positive impact on your blood pressure by eradicating the bug. In fact, in a study in the journal *Helicobacter,* Italian researchers determined that eliminating *H. pylori* lowered participants’ systolic blood pressure (the top number) by 12 points—an effect that’s comparable to prescription meds. That’s key since previous studies suggest that a 12-point drop in systolic blood pressure can reduce the risk of heart attacks and stroke by 44%. Experts explain that inflammation produced by *H. pylori* impedes the production of nitric oxide, a substance that safeguards against high blood pressure.

JON MCKEE

Women over 50 4 times more likely to harbor *H. pylori*

! **A bacterial infection caused by *H. pylori (Helicobacter pylori)* doubles women’s odds of suffering fatigue and other draining symptoms,** say researchers in *Scientific Reports.* Spread by contact with infected individuals, as well as contaminated food and water, *H. pylori* infects at least 50% of women. “Inflammation produced by *H. pylori* damages the lining of the intestines, impairing nutrient absorption and allowing toxins to leak into other tissues,” explains Rosario Ligresti, M.D., chief of the gastroenterology division at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey. The result: fatigue, brain fog, bloat, stomach pain and more.

! **Complicating matters:** Immune system dips that occur over time make women over 50 more vulnerable to *H. pylori.* In fact, Norwegian research suggests that infection risk climbs by 375% between our 20s and our 50s.

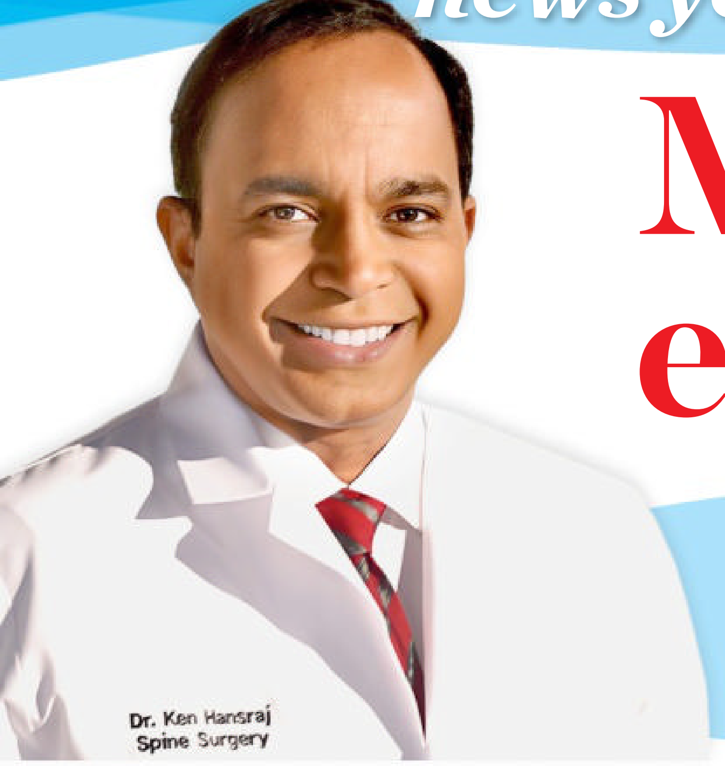
✓ **Doctors can ID *H. pylori* with breath, blood and stool tests.** And while “triple therapy,” which involves taking an acid-blocking drug and two antibiotics, is often advised, the steps below can eliminate *H. pylori* naturally.

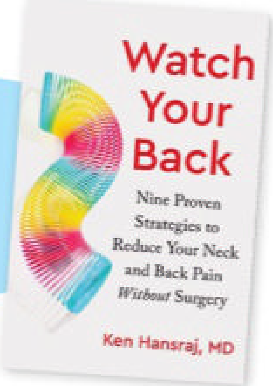
☺ **Black cumin seed eradicates *H. pylori* as effectively as antibiotics,** per an Asian study. The seed and its oil are high in the antibacterial compound *thymoquinone.* Dr. Ligresti advises taking 1,000 mg. of a product containing 5% thymoquinone after meals twice a day (try Life Extension Black Cumin Seed Oil 500 mg., LifeExtension.com). Bonus: In the study, the supplement also eased stomach pain and heartburn.

☺ **Also smart:** Season foods with turmeric and garlic. Both contain compounds that thwart *H. pylori* growth and heal the gut lining.

MD's keys to end back pain

More than 31 million Americans will endure back pain at some point—and women are twice as susceptible as men. Ken Hansraj, M.D., shares easy ways to dodge the pain




Watch Your Back
Nine Proven Strategies to Reduce Your Neck and Back Pain Without Surgery
Ken Hansraj, MD

The minute you wake up, you feel an ache in your back. You're not alone: More than 40% of women over 40 suffer from back pain. "Dwindling estrogen levels as women age lead to the degeneration of spinal discs, which can irritate nerve roots, causing pain," says spinal surgeon Ken Hansraj, M.D., author of *Watch Your Back: Nine Proven Strategies to Reduce Your Neck and Back Pain Without Surgery*. In fact, more than 500,000 Americans undergo back surgery every year. "But many of them can be saved from surgery with better care of their backs," says Dr. Hansraj. The best news? Eliminating pain doesn't require major changes. Here, his advice to take you from *argh* to *ahh!*

Enjoy a smoothie

Anti-inflammatory foods ease aches and strengthen bones, reducing the risk of fractures. To make a pain-zapping berry smoothie, blend 1 cup of almond milk, 1 cup of frozen blueberries, 2 tsp. of chia seeds and honey to taste. "Blueberries and chia seeds are rich in nutrients that protect the spine, and blueberries boast *quercetin*, an antioxidant with strong anti-inflammatory benefits."

Try 'wall angels'

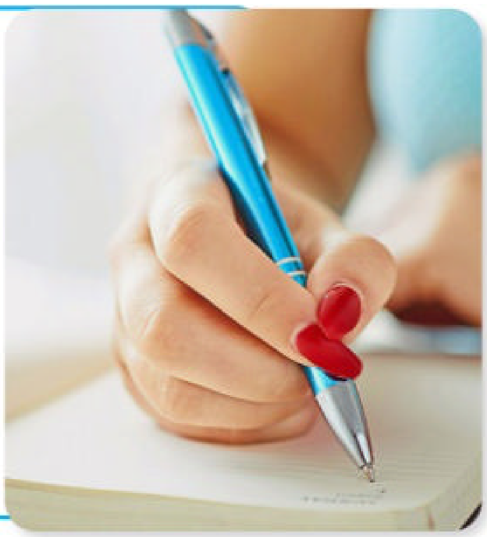
Posture-improving stretches curb aches. "'Wall angels' ease pain between the shoulders and neck," says Dr. Hansraj. To do: With arms at your sides, tuck your lower back against a wall. Press your shoulders and head against the wall and slowly lift your arms up, skimming the wall. When your hands touch, return to start. Do 5 to 10 angels 3 to 5 times a week.

Take fish oil daily

"Omega-3s relieve back pain, thanks to their anti-inflammatory effects," says Dr. Hansraj. In fact, a study in the journal *Surgical Neurology* found that patients with back pain who took 1,200 to 2,400 mg. of omega-3s daily reported significant pain relief, and 59% of them stopped taking their prescription pain meds. One to try: Nature's Bounty Fish Oil, 1,200 mg.

Power up positivity

A positive, optimistic outlook is shown to help long-term back-pain sufferers cope with and ease aches, says Dr. Hansraj. "If you're able to overcome the negativity pain can generate, you'll be in a better position to cope with and alleviate pain." One way to do that? Gratitude journaling. Regularly jotting down three things you're thankful for has been shown to calm inflammation and relieve pain.



Watch your belly

"Deep breathing quiets the stress response, a major pain trigger," says Dr. Hansraj. To do: Sit in a chair, inhale through your nose, feeling your belly rise for a slow count of five. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then exhale through your mouth, feeling your belly fall in five steps. "Belly breathing increases *neuroplasticity*, the brain's ability to change, reducing activity in the brain's pain centers."

Walk this way

"Motion is lotion" for lubricating stiff back muscles and spinal joints, assures Dr. Hansraj. "Aim for moderate exercise, like walking, for 30 minutes a day—this could be as little as 10 minutes at a time," he says. Even better: walking on a slight *incline*. "When we walk downhill, spinal joints become compressed, but when we walk uphill, spinal joints open up, easing tightness and relieving aches."

JEFF KARG; SHUTTERSTOCK; ADOBE STOCK. TEXT: KRISTINA MASTROCOLA

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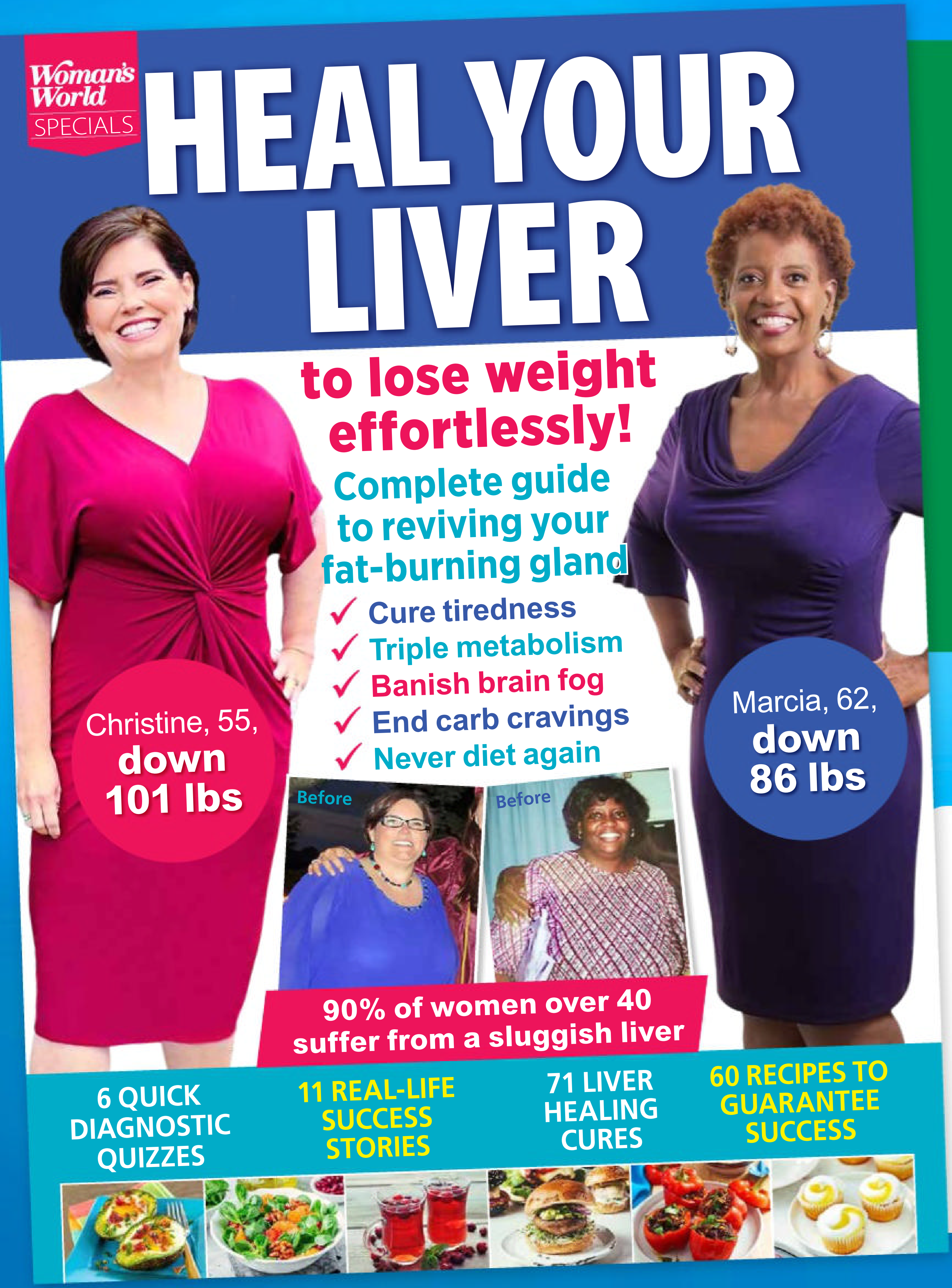

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Before

Before

90% of women over 40 suffer from a sluggish liver

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"House walking

Becky Pifer, 59, was carrying an extra 100 pounds that left her in pain and struggling to breathe. Then she found a fun solution that helped her lose the weight and feel revitalized!

Becky Pifer, Pelzer, SC

Why won't the coughing stop? thought Becky Pifer as she clung to her car for balance, struggling through another coughing episode, while her friend and her husband looked at her with concern. "I had developed a cough that would not go away and I would have coughing attacks that took my breath from me," recalls Becky, who was 250 pounds at the time. "It started to scare me because the women in my family have died quite early with health issues, and I feared if I didn't do something soon, I would have a similar fate.

Missing out on life

"The coughing wasn't the only thing that scared me. I was unable to walk for very long—on a family vacation to Chicago, I needed everyone to pause after every block so I could catch my breath and rest. I was eating Tums multiple times a day and I was a heavy snorer, all likely due to my weight. My husband had to wear earplugs to bed and my daughter could hear me across the house. But more than anything, it pained me so much to think of all the things I would miss in my daughter's life if I didn't get my health and weight under control. My mom was not at my graduation, was not at my wedding, missed my daughter being born…she missed being a part of so many things that I didn't want to miss out on.

"After the coughing episode outside the car and talking to my

changed my life!”

husband about my fears, I knew I needed to make a change. I started with diet modifications. After trying a few different strategies, I found that Weight Watchers worked best for me. It taught me how to eat healthy foods and lose weight. I planned my meals each week, loading up on protein and using recipes from Dish with Dee, a vlogger who shares Weight Watchers–friendly recipes and weight-loss advice on her website.

“At the time, I had zero interest in activity or exercise programs. I was mobile for my job, but when I got home from work, we would eat and I would watch TV or bake—even after I started my weight-loss journey. Plus, going to a gym terrified me. I felt like I would be judged on my size and inability to do things. But once the weight started coming off, I reached a point where I knew I could do more to lose faster, plus build my stamina and help myself feel better and healthier overall. If I could help it, I wasn’t going to be the person everyone was waiting on all the time.

A total turnaround

“That’s when I stumbled across Leslie Sansone’s *Walk Away the Pounds* workouts on DVD. I lived in Michigan at the time and I’ve never been a fan of being cold, so walking outside wasn’t an option. These videos showed me that I could walk indoors, but it took some time. At first, it was fairly difficult. I found myself resting throughout the program and worked up to being able to do more at a time.

“Soon, I found myself walking while watching my favorite television shows. Since I love watching TV, it seemed perfect—I could keep up with my shows while wearing a path in my carpet! I didn’t have a fitness tracker, so my goal was tied to finishing a show, and then two shows. It was a few months before I could master a full 1-hour walk without stopping. I found my pattern of walking was doing a lap around my living room while watching. I also did a lot of little spurts, working them in throughout the day as my schedule allowed.

“In the past year or so, in addition to walking throughout the day, I started using Leslie Sansone’s Walk at Home app, either alone or with a small group from Dish with Dee’s web group. We call ourselves the ‘Glam Squad,’ and each afternoon we get together on Zoom for a quick 1-mile indoor walk. It is such a wonderful motivation for us all to keep moving as we age, and we have become really great friends. And since moving to South Carolina a few years ago, my husband and I will go on nightly walks outside together too—I work hard to get 22,000 to 30,000 steps a day.

“Since I hit and passed my goal weight of 149 pounds, I’ve stepped up the pace during my walks to get in more steps and get my heart rate up more consistently. I occasionally use resistance bands and small weights while walking with the Glam Squad to switch things up and keep it interesting. We also got a bike and a rower about a year ago, and I will use one of these three times a week.

“The coughing fits have disappeared along with the weight, and I no longer snore. Walking has been such an amazing way to improve my health—if I had not added it, I don’t think I would have ever reached my goal weight! I’m really looking forward to staying at this weight with walking as a pillar. And these days, when my family is traveling, *they* have to rest before I do—I’m like the Energizer Bunny!”

—As told to Alyssa Sybertz

JOHN BROOKER/FISHEYE STUDIOS. H&M: ERICA/COTTON ROUGE & COMPANY

How indoor walking powers off the pounds

Walking at home, especially in short spurts during the day, is a surefire way to lose weight. “The more often we move, the less fat we store,” says Danine Fruge, M.D., Medical Director at Pritikin Longevity Center in Miami. “If you work out more often, you'll enjoy more health benefits and sustainable weight loss.” And short sessions are powerful! A study at Massachusetts General Hospital found that just 10 minutes of walking increased levels of compounds linked to fat burning by 50%.

You can walk indoors no matter the weather, and if you do it while watching TV, you don't have to find extra time for it. Plus, varying bursts of fast walking with slower moves is shown to burn twice as many calories.

To get the perks, follow Becky Pifer’s lead and take mini walks throughout the day—during TV commercials, when you’re brushing your teeth, while waiting for water to boil—at least 5 minutes every hour. Studies show doing so works as effectively as one long sweat session, but feels easier. You can also try indoor walking workouts, which guide you through various moves, in addition to walking in place. Try the Walk at Home app or search "indoor walks" on YouTube.

Stress-free-

Actress, author, health advocate and grandmother of three Suzanne Somers, 76, shares the strategies that keep her slim, worry-free and in love with life

By Bonnie Siegler

Two years ago, a fall down a flight of stairs left Suzanne Somers painfully aware of just how fragile life can be. “I broke my neck and spine, fractured my hip, injured my hand and dislocated my jaw,” the beloved *Three’s Company* star shares with FIRST. “My road to healing has had lots of ups and downs.”

With time and physical therapy, Suzanne has seen that road level out, but she credits her husband of 45 years, Alan Hamel, with the secret to her healing: love. “I look at him and think, *I’m so fortunate,*” Suzanne says with a smile. And this Valentine’s Day, she’s celebrating the love that has healed her, body and soul. “I used to beat myself up and always felt I needed to be better, but if I were to tell my younger self something now, I’d say, ‘Stop trying to be perfect—enjoy each day, you lucky girl!’” Here, more of Suzanne’s tips to fill each day with health and happiness.

STRESS RX:
Simple soothers

“One of my favorite ways to de-stress is cranking up the music!” Suzanne says. “I love Sarah Vaughn, Bobby Darin and Ella. One of my goals in physical therapy is to return to yoga—it’s my bliss and a wonderful way to relax! My favorite pose is pigeon pose, which really opens up the hips and relieves pain and stiffness. It’s the simplest things that have become so meaningful to me.”

Secret weapon: *A morning check-in with God*

“I meditate every morning in the form of prayer,” Suzanne shares. “I just talk to God like a friend, and I thank Him for all my blessings. Focusing on what I have and how grateful I am brings me joy”

–Suzanne's way!

MELTS A MENOPOT:

Simple snacking

"I love snacking on persimmons, apples, pears, melons, tangerines, cherries and mangoes," Suzanne says. "And organic chips and salsa or Brillat cheese with truffle honey on a Raincoast Crisp cracker are great too. So yummy—and good for you!" In fact, nibbling on fruit and cheese can calm your nerves and boost your pep for up to 4 hours, say Stanford University researchers. The complex carbs in fruit switch on the brain's production of mood-elevating *serotonin,* while cheese's *casein,* a slow-digesting protein, spurs energy.

DEEPENS SLEEP:

A blissful bath

For restorative sleep, Suzanne opts for Epsom salt baths to wind down before bed. "Epsom salts are loaded with magnesium to help calm you," she shares. "Lighting natural wax candles helps too. Coconut, peppermint crème and cinnamon sugar are ones I love in my own line. They contain healing essential oils. I also have a supplement called Calm Renew, made from *L-theanine* and lemon balm…it puts me right to sleep." To boot, studies say taking a warm Epsom salt bath 1 to 2 hours before bed can reduce pain and help you fall asleep faster.

KEEPS THE SPARK:

Small acts of love

Together for more than 54 years, Suzanne says she falls more in love with her husband, Alan, every day. How do they keep the flame burning bright? "Every morning, he makes me coffee and brings it to me in bed," Suzanne shares with a smile. "He makes the best coffee—strong and organic from Trader Joe's. It's a spectacular way to start the day." Suzanne says they also give each other a lot of attention. "We compliment and spoil one another. It's about honoring and respecting one another and giving your partner what they need. He starts off my day in romantic bliss, and we just try to keep it going."

CHECK OUT Suzanne's delicious new superfood!

Ever at the forefront of all things healthy, Suzanne says that her go-to for energy and good digestion is her new Gut Renew Chocolate Superfood Protein Formula—a gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan protein powder in her Gut Renew line.

"So many health issues come from the gut. Women are always telling me that they're bloated or uncomfortable or gaining weight," Suzanne explains of the inspiration to create Gut Renew. "They don't feel well and, most important, they don't feel good about themselves. So we developed this protein powder.

"I never thought it would have such a big effect on people, and now that it's in chocolate form, you can't get much better! And when your gut is working right, *you* are right. We have a saying in our company of doing well while doing good—and that makes me very happy!"

For more, visit SuzanneSomers.com.

CHOCOLATE
suzanne
GUT RENEW
SUPERFOOD PROTEIN FORMULA
VALUE SIZE!
30 SERVINGS

Suzanne's Gut Renew Chocolate Protein is her new favorite

CINDY GOLD; SHUTTERSTOCK (4)

Brain benefits of maintaining a routine

It boosts happiness and mental sharpness, say researchers in *JAMA Psychiatry.* In their study of 1,800 older adults, those who woke up earlier and stayed mentally and physically active throughout the day were happier and performed better on tests of brain health than those who woke up later and had less daily structure. The researchers say it's not so much the early wake-up that matters, but staying engaged throughout the day. They also note that changing your routine to be more structured could improve overall health.

Unexpected way to ward off boredom

Here's a surprising perk of being kind to yourself if you make an embarrassing mistake or come up short on a goal: It likely keeps you from getting bored, say researchers in *Personality and Individual Differences.* They conducted a series of studies that measured self-compassion and boredom and discovered that subjects who exhibited kindness toward themselves also reported being less bored. The investigators say people who possess this trait are more likely to feel their life has greater meaning, which has many mental health benefits that could be a buffer to boredom.

Found: The secret power of having a side hustle

Good news if you're moonlighting as a writer or selling crafts on the weekends: Having a side gig could make you better at your full-time job. A study of 337 employees in the *Academy of Management Journal* looked at people with "side hustles" over the course of 10 days and found that these gigs produced a spillover effect that increased employee engagement, performance and enjoyment of their full-time job.

The surprising key to better productivity

Listening to the right type of white noise can help you power through a daunting project. Scientists at the University of Southern California found that subjects who listened to low levels of white noise (sitting in a library) were less stressed and scored better on tests of creativity and focus than those who listened to louder white noise (sitting in a café). Why? It seems soft white noise has a Goldilocks effect, helping the nervous system weed out and act upon important brain signals, but louder noise is distracting.

67% Number of people who say sharing a meal with others lowers their stress

Source: The American Heart Association

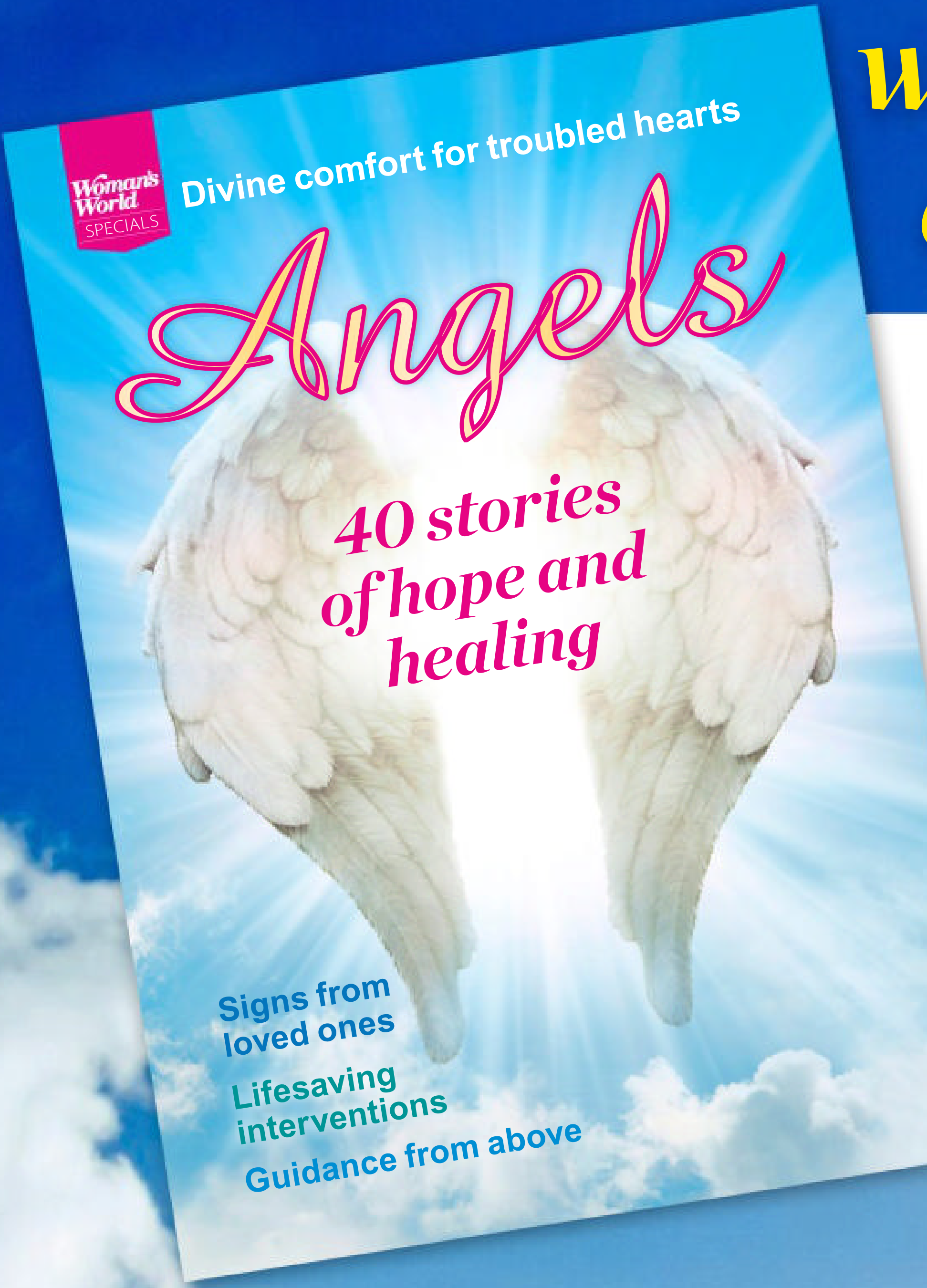
Surefire cure for anxiety

The next time you spot a cardinal resting on a snowy branch, take a second to listen to it sing—doing so can ease stress. German researchers asked 275 volunteers to rate their stress and anxiety levels after listening to recordings of birdsong and found that the sound significantly reduced anxiety and depression (traffic sounds had the opposite effect). The scientists say the cheery sound of birds singing distracts us from outside stressors our brain perceives as threats, and this brings on calm. No birds around you this time of year? You can get the perks by listening to a recording of birds singing (the National Audubon Society has many at Audubon.org).

SHUTTERSTOCK (2). TEXT: CASSIE SHORTSLEEVE

Turn hurt into hope

with a spirit-lifting digest magazine!



Woman's World SPECIALS

Divine comfort for troubled hearts

Angels

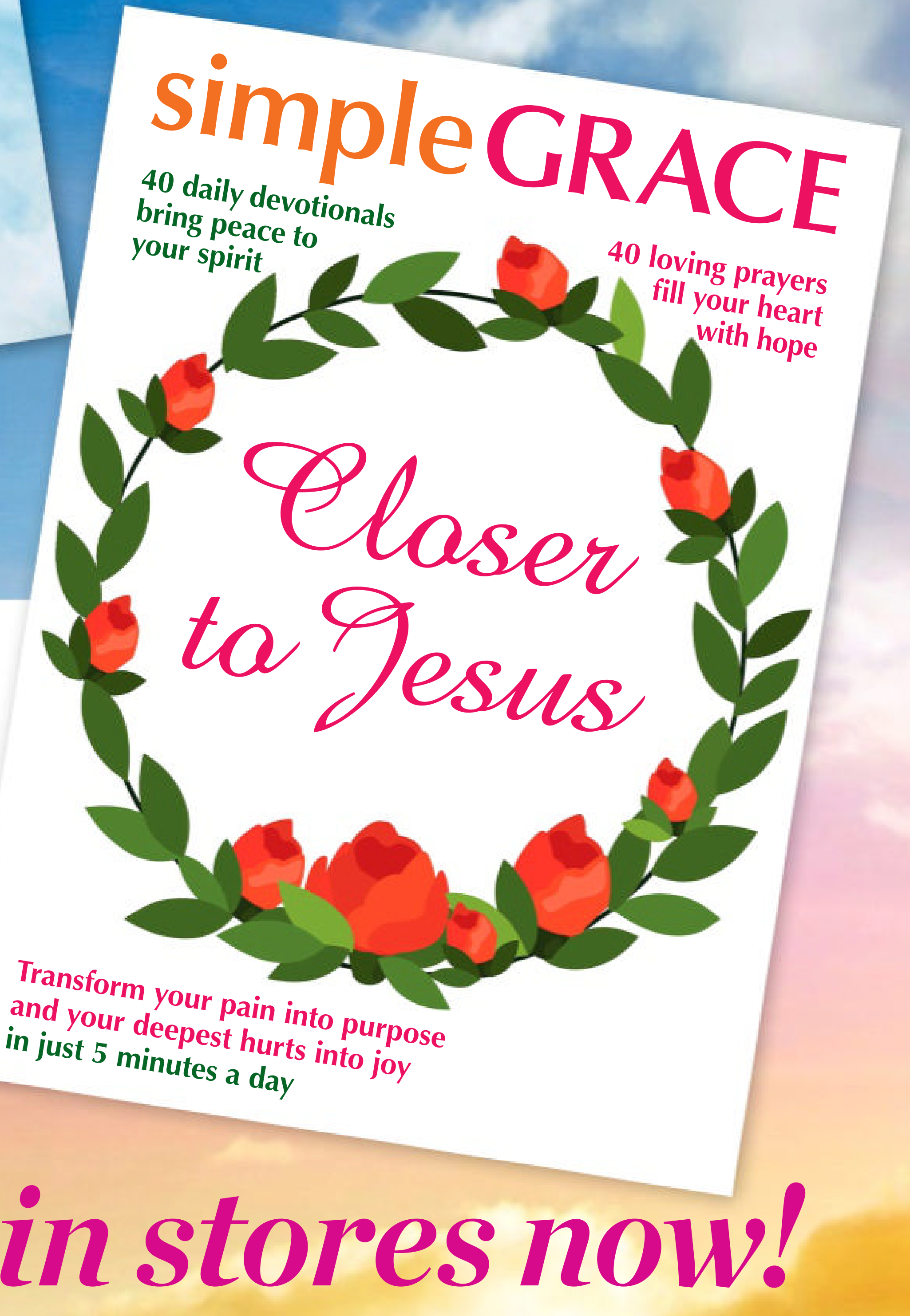
40 stories of hope and healing

Signs from loved ones

Lifesaving interventions

Guidance from above

Discover the power of miracles with this collection of 40 true guardian angel stories from the editors of *Woman's World.* Each inspiring story will bring comfort to you and the hearts of those you gift it to!
Find it at MagazineShop.us/Angels



simple GRACE

40 daily devotionals bring peace to your spirit

40 loving prayers fill your heart with hope

Closer to Jesus

Transform your pain into purpose and your deepest hurts into joy in just 5 minutes a day

Feel your spirit soar with this 40-day devotional from the editors of *First for Women.* Each day offers a reading and a prayer that open your heart to Jesus, leaving you feeling loved and at peace. **Find it at MagazineShop.us/SimpleGrace**

Both on sale in stores now!

Break free from

We all know folks who drain our energy and sink our mood. Here, empowering ways to sidestep happiness sappers and restore your bliss

You're getting ready for a "Galentine's Day" brunch with friends, when your cellphone rings. It's your sister, calling to complain (again!) about her latest work drama. And just like that, your mood goes from excited to exhausted…and now you're running late. You love your sister, but her knack for making everything about her sends your stress soaring and your energy plummeting.

"The quality of our relationships affects our health and our emotions," says psychiatrist Judith Orloff, M.D., author of *The Empath's Survival Guide*. "But some people suck the joy right out of us, then make us feel like we're 'too sensitive.'"

Like most movie vampires, "happiness vampires" often look normal, which can make them hard to spot. To help you identify them, get a little curious, advises psychologist Anna Napawan, Ph.D., author of *Happiness Workbook*. "Ask yourself, *Why am I overwhelmed when I'm with this person?* and *Do I feel comfortable around them?*" Familiarity isn't the same as comfort, she observes. "Just because you're used to certain behaviors doesn't mean they're good for you."

Thankfully, all it takes is a few easy strategies to neutralize such negativity. "I don't think of people as entirely toxic, but as having *traits* that drain us," says Napawan. This means we can target specific behaviors and even mend strained relationships. Read on for simple ways to boost your joy and discover the peace you deserve.

JOY VAMPIRES

TO DODGE PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVENESS

NAME THE EMOTION

After a disagreement with your mother-in-law, she gives you the silent treatment. “Passive-aggressiveness is anger with a smile,” says Dr. Orloff, who explains that people uncomfortable with anger or frustration find indirect ways, like the silent treatment or backhanded compliments, to express their feelings.

When this behavior leaves you hurt and confused, pinpoint the hidden emotion behind it. “You might say, ‘You’re giving me the silent treatment—are you angry with me?’” says Napawan. “Naming the emotion *for* them allows both of you to address it.” And consider extending compassion: “It’s okay to be mad, but how can we work through it together?” If they keep giving you the cold shoulder, you may need to set a boundary, adds Dr. Orloff. “Just keep it concrete. Passive-aggressive people respond to specificity because it’s not overwhelming.” For example: “I can’t keep coming over if we don’t discuss the argument we had.” Addressing one situation at a time is direct but not confrontational.

TO THWART A COMPLAINER

SET TIME LIMITS

Every time your friend calls, she wants to vent. “Chronic complainers are so draining because when we offer solutions, they’re often not receptive, and instead say, ‘Yes, but…’” says Dr. Orloff. Such incessant pessimism makes you feel both helpless and exhausted.

Protect yourself from a complainer by being clear with them. “If they’re a friend or loved one, you can show them empathy while still remaining firm by saying something like, ‘I’m sorry you’re going through this, but I only have a few minutes to talk.’” This is what Dr. Orloff calls a “positive no” because it’s concise yet kind. “It’s draining and demoralizing to try to fix people’s problems when they’re not open to our advice, so you could also tell them, ‘If you want to explore *solutions,* we can plan a longer time to talk.’” This kind of boundary encourages them to problem-solve rather than simply complain, which will ultimately bring you closer together.

TO DEFUSE A CRITIC

REVEAL *YOUR* TRUTH

At Sunday dinner with your whole family, your mother tells you the chicken you made is a bit dry and suggests cooking it at a lower temperature next time. You know she means well, but it seems like she’s *always* finding fault. Says Dr. Orloff, “It hurts to be criticized, but it’s especially hard when the comments are unsolicited and come from people we love.”

When dealing with a chronic critic, particularly if it’s someone close to you, consider revealing a bit of your heart. “Instead of telling them they’re being rude, name the vulnerability you’re feeling by saying, ‘I know you’re trying to help, but it really hurts,’” encourages Napawan. “Because they care about you, they’ll likely accept what you’re telling them—but if they *do* get defensive, show self-kindness and remind yourself, *They’re not yet ready to hear what I’m saying.*” This lets you step back and get a broader perspective so you can focus on what to do next, such as limiting how often or how long you spend with critical people.

TO OUTSMART A NARCISSIST

TRY ‘GRAY ROCKING’

Your new co-worker puts the “I” in team. In fact, everything out of his mouth is about himself. He seemed nice when you were first helping him learn the ropes, but in hindsight, you feel like he was just using you. Says Dr. Orloff, “Narcissists are like chameleons—they read people well and can play different roles based on what they think we need—but they reject or turn on us as soon as we do something they don’t like.”

The best way to handle a narcissist is to starve their ego. “Be as non-emotionally reactive as you can—like a gray rock,” advises Dr. Orloff. “If they want to hook you back into their orbit and ask you to do them a favor, say something direct like, ‘I don’t want to do X right now.’ Say it almost as if you’re a machine, dull and boring, because narcissists exploit your emotions to feel more powerful.” Indeed, this kind of “vampire” feeds on getting a rise out of you. That’s why simply meeting their arrogance with boredom defangs their ego while boosting your sense of self. In the end, the best way to outsmart joy vampires of all types is to know that *you* deserve happiness and to be surrounded by positive people.

TWINKLE. TEXT: KRISTINA MASTROCOLA

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K3F006

Quick-prep dishes mean more time to enjoy!

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page 48

Easy air fryer mmm

This must-have kitchen gadget lets you cook up all your comfort favorites—like fried chicken, coconut shrimp and wings—without the fuss (or the fat!)

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Turn for recipes

RHAPSODY MEDIA (3); ADOBE STOCK (2); ARE MEDIA

So-good cozy comfort

Skimp on fat, not on flavor

Bloomin' Onion with Smoky Sauce

Buttermilk Fried Chicken

Chocolate-Raspberry Cupcakes

Cheddar-Bacon Twice-Baked Potatoes

*How we made it **healthier***

Fire up focus with buttermilk. We added this creamy treat to our chicken marinade for extra flavor, and it can help you concentrate too. That's because buttermilk's combination of calcium and whey protein energizes brain nerves to sharpen attentiveness by 40%.

RHAPSODY MEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Fabulous fried chicken

Buttermilk Fried Chicken

ACTIVE TIME: **30 min.** TOTAL TIME: **1½ hrs. + overnight** SERVES: **6**

Marinating chicken in garlic-infused buttermilk, then coating in crushed cornflakes guarantees this dish "fries" up juicy inside and crispy outside

1 cup buttermilk
2 tsp. garlic powder
4 lbs. chicken pieces
3 cups cornflakes, *crushed*
⅓ cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp. dried oregano
Radishes and oregano leaves (optional)

① In large bowl, mix buttermilk, garlic powder, ¼ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Add chicken; toss until coated. Cover; chill at least 2 hrs. or overnight, turning chicken occasionally. Transfer chicken pieces to bowl; discard marinade.

② Coat rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. In separate large bowl, combine cornflakes, flour, dried oregano, ¼ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper. Working with one piece at a time, coat chicken with crumb mixture, gently pressing to adhere. Transfer to baking sheet.

③ Heat 7-qt. air fryer according to manufacturer's instructions for air-fry at 325°F. Coat air-fryer basket and chicken pieces with cooking spray.

④ In 2 batches, place chicken in basket. Place basket in air fryer. Air-fry until golden brown and chicken is no longer pink near bone, 25–30 min. per batch. Transfer to serving platter. If desired, garnish with radishes and oregano leaves.

Per serving: Cal. 510 **Pro.** 68g **Carb.** 20g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 3g **Chol.** 230mg **Sod.** 410mg **Total fat:** 16g **Sat.** 5g

Bloomin' Onion with Smoky Sauce

ACTIVE TIME: **15 min.** TOTAL TIME: **50 min.** SERVES: **6**

Old Bay seasoning plus a quick-fix dip give this classic extra *mmm*

½ cup bottled Thousand Island salad dressing
1 Tbs. prepared horseradish (not drained)
1 tsp. smoked paprika
1 large sweet onion, about 1 lb.
1 egg
¼ cup half-and-half
½ cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp. Old Bay seasoning

① In bowl, mix dressing, horseradish and paprika; chill. Place crisper plate in basket of 5.5-qt. air fryer. Coat plate with cooking spray. Place basket in air fryer; heat to air-fry at 300°F.

② Peel onion, leaving root intact. Trim ¼" from bottom of onion. Making sure not to cut all the way through onion, cut into 16 wedges. Gently pull layers away from center.

③ Whisk egg and half-and-half. Mix flour and seasoning. Coat onion with some of flour mixture; brush with egg mixture. Coat in remaining flour mixture; coat with cooking spray. Air-fry until onion is tender and coating is crisp, 30–35 min. Serve with sauce.

Per serving: Cal. 180 **Pro.** 3g **Carb.** 19g **Fiber** 2g **Sug.** 8g **Chol.** 40mg **Sod.** 330mg **Total fat:** 10g **Sat.** 3g

dinner

Cheddar-Bacon Twice-Baked Potatoes

ACTIVE TIME: **40 min.** TOTAL TIME: **1½ hrs.** SERVES: **6**

Cheese inside and on top combine for double ooey-gooey goodness

- **6** (8 oz.) **baking potatoes**
- **⅓ cup milk,** *heated*
- **3 Tbs. butter,** *melted*
- **1 cup shredded sharp cheddar**
- **¾ cup sour cream**
- **3 slices crumbled cooked bacon**
- **2 Tbs. chopped fresh chives**

① Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry bake at 350°F. Prick potatoes; air-fry until tender, about 40 min. Let cool slightly.

② Cut slice from tops of potatoes; scoop out flesh from tops and bottoms into bowl. Discard tops. Add milk, butter and ¼ tsp. salt to potato mixture; mash. Reserve 2 Tbs. cheese. Stir remaining cheese into potato mixture; spoon into skins. Air-fry until golden, 7–8 min. Top with reserved cheese. Add sour cream, bacon and chives.

Per serving: Cal. 320 **Pro.** 10g **Carb.** 30g **Fiber** 2g **Sug.** 3g **Chol.** 55mg **Sod.** 340mg **Total fat:** 18g **Sat.** 11g

Chocolate-Raspberry Cupcakes

ACTIVE TIME: **1 hr.** TOTAL TIME: **2½ hrs.** SERVES: **9**

These from-scratch treats are sure to delight from first sight to last bite

- **¾ cup all-purpose flour**
- **½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder**
- **¾ tsp. baking powder**
- **1½ cups butter,** *at room temp.*
- **¾ cup packed brown sugar**
- **2 eggs**
- **¾ cup milk**
- **1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **¾ cup raspberries + additional**
- **2 Tbs. + 2 cups confectioners' sugar**
- **10 drops liquid red food coloring**
- **White nonpareils** (optional)

① Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry bake at 325°F. Line 9 (2¾") ramekins with cupcake liners. Combine flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and ¼ tsp. salt. On medium speed, beat ½ cup butter and brown sugar until fluffy, 2 min. On low, beat in eggs then flour mixture, milk and vanilla. Divide among liners. In 2 batches, bake until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, about 14 min. per batch. Cool.

② In food processor, puree ¾ cup raspberries and 2 Tbs. confectioners' sugar; strain. On medium, beat remaining butter until fluffy, 2 min. On low, beat in remaining confectioners' sugar then berry mixture and food coloring. On medium-high, beat until fluffy, 2–3 min. Transfer to pastry bag with star tip. Pipe on cupcakes. Top with remaining berries. If desired, garnish with nonpareils.

Per serving: Cal. 550 **Pro.** 4g **Carb.** 65g **Fiber** 2g **Sug.** 49g **Chol.** 125mg **Sod.** 330mg **Total fat:** 33g **Sat.** 21g

ADOBE STOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK (2)

Air-fryer wings 3 delicious ways

Once you taste these crispy bites, you'll never go back to deep-frying again—perfect for Super Bowl or anytime

Garlic-Parmesan

A squeeze of lemon juice adds extra brightness. ***To make:*** In bowl, mix 2 lbs. chicken wings, ¼ cup grated Parmesan, 3 Tbs. chopped parsley, 2 Tbs. olive oil, 1 Tbs. lemon juice, 4 cloves minced garlic and ¼ tsp. salt; toss. In batches, lay wings in single layer in basket; air-fry at 375°F for 25 min. per batch, flipping halfway through. *Serves 4*

Sticky Sesame

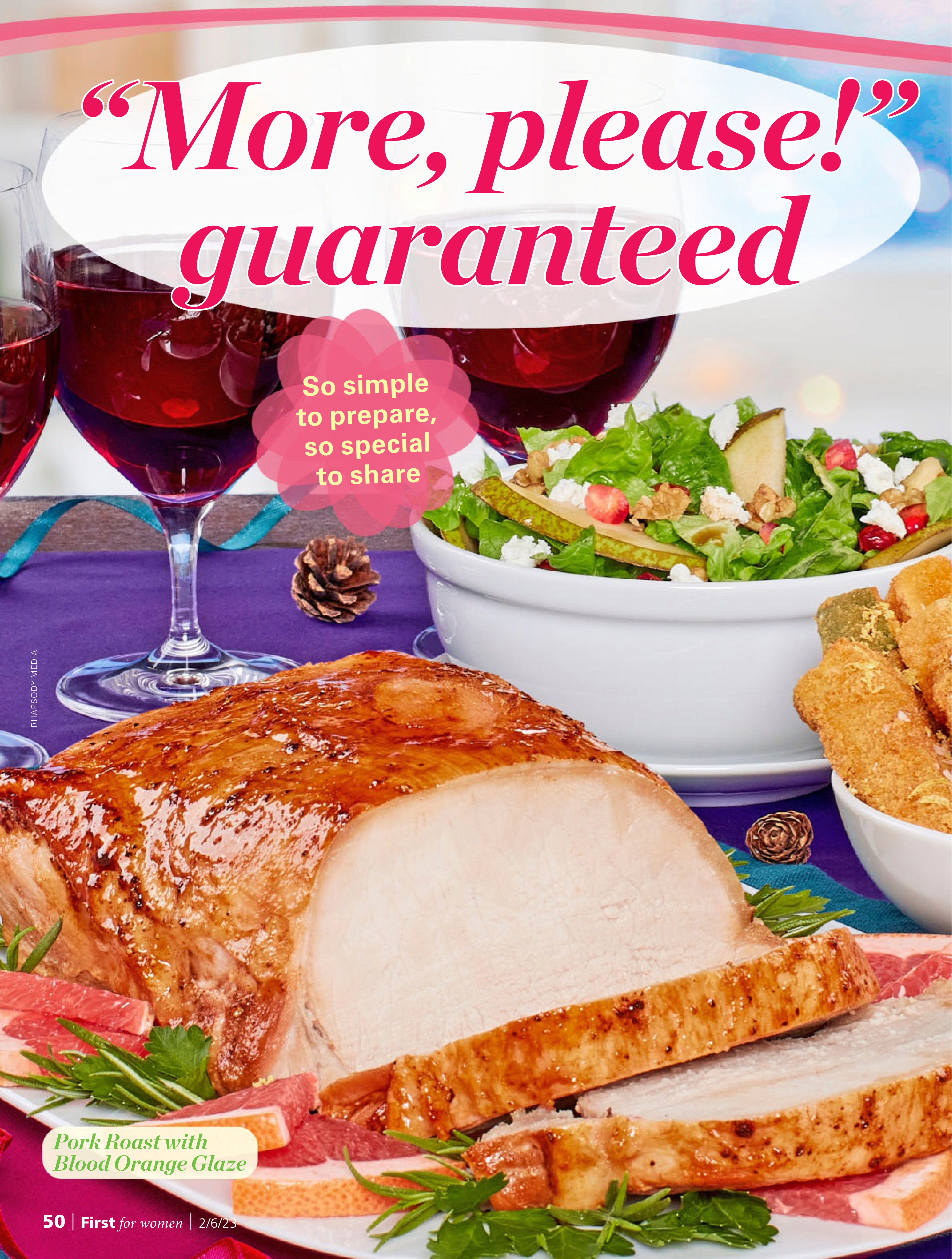
A hint of honey in the coating adds just the right amount of sweetness. ***To make:*** Simmer ⅓ cup honey, ¼ cup soy sauce, 1 Tbs. grated ginger, 1 Tbs. butter, 1 tsp. sesame oil and 3 cloves minced garlic until thickened. In batches, lay 2 lbs. wings in single layer in basket; air-fry at 400°F for 20 min., flipping halfway through. Coat in glaze; sprinkle with sesame seeds. *Serves 4*

Cilantro-Lime

For extra tang, serve these smoky treats with lime wedges. ***To make:*** Marinate 2 lbs. wings in ¼ cup lime juice, 3 Tbs. chopped cilantro, 2 cloves minced garlic, 2 Tbs. olive oil, 1 tsp. chili powder and ½ tsp. salt, 30 min. In batches, air-fry at 400°F for 20 min., flipping halfway through. *Serves 4*

“More, please!” guaranteed

So simple to prepare, so special to share



RHAPSODY MEDIA

Pork Roast with Blood Orange Glaze

Raspberry-Topped Cheesecake

Crouton-Crusted Zucchini Sticks

Savory Stuffed Mushrooms

How we made it healthier

Soothe heartburn with honey. While it adds sweetness to our pork roast, this treat can also help quash heartburn in 60 seconds. Credit goes to the anti-inflammatory enzymes in honey that shield the throat from damaging stomach acid.

Succulent pork roast

Pork Roast with Blood Orange Glaze

ACTIVE TIME: **30 min.** TOTAL TIME: **2 hrs.** SERVES: **8**

Citrus juice, zingy mustard, wine and fresh herbs reduce into a stunning glaze for a pork centerpiece that's perfect for a special gathering

- 1 (3 lb.) **boneless pork loin roast**
- 4 **blood oranges,** *juiced,* or 1 cup tangerine juice
- 1 **cup dry white wine**
- ⅓ **cup sugar**
- ⅓ **cup honey**
- 1 **Tbs. white wine vinegar**
- 1 **Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary**
- 2 **tsp. Dijon mustard**

① Heat 7-qt. air fryer according to manufacturer's directions for air-fry at 360°F. Line bottom of air-fryer basket with parchment paper. Lightly coat pork with cooking spray; season with ¼ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper.

② Place pork in air-fryer basket; place basket in air fryer. Cook, flipping halfway through cooking, until meat thermometer inserted into thickest part registers 145°F, about 45 min. Let stand 5 min.

③ Meanwhile, in small pot, combine remaining ingredients with 1 cup water; heat over medium-high heat, bring to boil; reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer until thickened, 30–35 min. Brush pork with enough glaze to coat. Carve pork into ½"-thick slices. Serve with remaining glaze.

Per serving: Cal. 540 **Pro.** 46g **Carb.** 24g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 22g **Chol.** 140mg **Sod.** 190mg **Total fat:** 26g **Sat.** 9g

Easy variation

Pomegranate-Thyme: Sub in 1 cup pomegranate juice for the blood orange juice. Sub in chopped fresh thyme for the rosemary. Continue with recipe as directed.

Crouton-Crusted Zucchini Sticks

ACTIVE TIME: **45 min.** TOTAL TIME: **1½ hrs.** SERVES: **8**

These low-carb veggie "fries" get their crisp coating from crushed-up garlic and butter croutons

- 1 (5 oz.) **pkg. garlic-and-butter croutons**
- ¾ **cup yellow cornmeal**
- 1 **tsp. grated lemon zest + additional**
- ⅛ **tsp. cayenne pepper**
- ⅓ **cup all-purpose flour**
- 3 **eggs,** *beaten*
- 2 **lbs. zucchini,** *trimmed, cut into ½"-thick sticks*

① In food processor, pulse croutons with cornmeal, 1 tsp. zest and cayenne until finely ground; transfer to bowl. In separate bowl, mix flour and ½ tsp. salt. Place eggs in third bowl. Working with 2–3 zucchini sticks at a time, coat in flour; dip in egg, then crumb mixture, shaking off excess.

② Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry at 375°F. Coat air-fryer basket with cooking spray. In batches, place zucchini in single layer in basket; coat with cooking spray. Air-fry until crisp tender, 5 min. Transfer to plate. Return all batches of fries to basket. Air-fry until hot, 3–4 min. Transfer to serving plate. If desired, sprinkle with lemon zest.

Per serving: Cal. 170 **Pro.** 6g **Carb.** 27g **Fiber** 2g **Sug.** 3g **Chol.** 45mg **Sod.** 270mg **Total fat:** 5g **Sat.** 0g

supper

Savory Stuffed Mushrooms

ACTIVE TIME: **25 min.** TOTAL TIME: **45 min.** SERVES: **8**

Stuffing mix and shredded fontina add richness to these tasty gems

16 (2½") **white stuffing mushrooms with stems**
2 Tbs. butter
1 rib celery, *chopped*
1 (6 oz.) **pkg. lower-sodium chicken stuffing mix**
1 cup shredded fontina, 4 oz.
2 scallions, *chopped*
1 Tbs. chopped fresh sage

① Remove stems from mushrooms; chop stems. In skillet, heat butter over medium heat. Add celery; cook, stirring, until tender, 7–8 min. Add chopped stems; cook 5 min. Stir in stuffing mix, 1¼ cups water, fontina, scallions and sage. Remove from heat. Place mushrooms, stem side up, on baking sheet; fill with stuffing.

② Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry at 325°F. In 2 batches, add stuffed mushrooms to basket; air-fry until golden and cooked through, about 15 min. Return first batch of mushrooms to air fryer; air-fry until hot, 3–4 min. Repeat with second batch.

Per serving: Cal. 170 **Pro.** 8g **Carb.** 19g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 3g **Chol.** 15mg **Sod.** 420mg **Total fat:** 7g **Sat.** 3g

Raspberry-Topped Cheesecake

ACTIVE TIME: **1 hr.** TOTAL TIME: **13½ hrs.** SERVES: **16**

Sandwich cookies create the fudgy crust on this dreamy showstopper

12 crème-filled chocolate-sandwich cookies, *finely ground*
3 Tbs. butter, *melted*
4 (8 oz.) **pkgs. cream cheese,** *at room temp.*
1 cup sugar
4 eggs
½ cup sour cream
2 Tbs. cornstarch
1 tsp. vanilla extract
⅓ cup seedless raspberry jam
Whipped cream and fresh raspberries (optional)

① Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry bake at 275°F. Coat 8"x3" springform pan with cooking spray. In bowl, mix crumbs and butter; press in bottom and ½" up side of pan. Place pan in air-fryer basket. Air-fry until set, 8 min.
On medium, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. On low, beat in eggs, sour cream, cornstarch and vanilla. Spoon into crust; cover with foil. Air-fry until center jiggles slightly when shaken, about 55 min.; let cool on rack. Cover; chill 8 hrs.

② Spread jam on cake; chill. Run knife around cake edge. Remove side of pan. Transfer cake to serving plate. If desired, top with cream and berries.

Per serving: Cal. 360 **Pro.** 6g **Carb.** 29g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 22g **Chol.** 110mg **Sod.** 240mg **Total fat:** 25g **Sat.** 13g

SHUTTERSTOCK; ADOBE STOCK (2)

3 quick air-fryer breakfasts

Start the day deliciously with these fast-prep morning marvels that are big on flavor and make cleanup a breeze

Chocolate Banana Bread

Melty chocolate chips make this tender treat feel like dessert. ***To make:*** Beat 6 Tbs. butter and ¾ cup sugar until fluffy; beat in 1 cup milk, 3 eggs, 2 mashed bananas and 1 tsp. vanilla extract. Fold in 2¼ cups self-rising flour and 1 cup chocolate chips; pour into 2 (3"x2½"x2¼") silicone loaf pans. Air-fry at 360°F for 20 min. *Serves 6*

Mini Cheese Frittatas

These protein-rich delights get a tangy kick, thanks to creamy Greek yogurt. ***To make:*** Coat 6 silicone baking cups with cooking spray. In bowl, combine 6 eggs, ⅓ cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt, ½ cup shredded Gruyère cheese, ¼ cup sliced scallions, ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper; pour into cups. Place in basket; air-fry at 350°F for 5 min. *Serves 6*

Funfetti Pancake Bites

Convenient cake mix is the simple secret to these light-as-air poufs. ***To make:*** In bowl, combine ½ cup pancake mix, ½ cup funfetti cake mix, ¾ cup water and 1 tsp. vanilla; spoon into 9-pc. silicone donut bitelet pan. Place in basket; air-fry at 320°F for 8 min. Serve dusted with confectioners' sugar. *Serves 4*

Game-day eats

Our crowd-pleasing air-fryer snacks will give your gang another reason to cheer

Coconut Shrimp

ACTIVE TIME: **20 min.**
TOTAL TIME: **35 min.** SERVES: **8**

- **1 cup sweetened flaked coconut,** *chopped*
- **⅔ cup seasoned panko breadcrumbs**
- **½ tsp. less-sodium Old Bay seasoning**
- **1 cup baking mix,** such as Bisquick
- **1 egg**
- **1 lb. peeled, deveined jumbo shrimp**

Per serving: Cal. 170 **Pro.** 10g **Carb.** 19g **Fiber** 2g **Sug.** 5g **Chol.** 95mg **Sod.** 520mg **Total fat:** 5g **Sat.** 4g

Old Bay seasoning in the coating is the secret to these crunchy bites that prep in just 20 minutes

1 Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry at 325°F. Coat basket with cooking spray. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. In medium bowl, combine coconut, panko breadcrumbs and Old Bay seasoning. In separate bowl, stir together ⅔ cup baking mix, egg and ⅓ cup water.

2 Place remaining ⅓ cup baking mix in separate bowl; add shrimp. Toss until coated; dip in egg mixture, then coconut mixture. Transfer to baking sheet. In batches, place shrimp in single layer in air-fryer basket. Air-fry until crisp and golden, 5–6 min. per batch.

Pair it with... Sweet Chili Sauce

This zingy accompaniment is the ideal go-with for succulent shrimp. To make: Bring ⅓ cup water, ¼ cup rice vinegar, 2 Tbs. each honey and ketchup, 1 tsp. each minced garlic, grated ginger and soy sauce, and ¾ tsp. red pepper flakes to a simmer. Whisk 1½ tsp. cornstarch and 1 Tbs. water; stir in. Cook 2 min.

ADOBE STOCK (3); LINES + ANGLES

that score smiles

Corny Crab Cakes

ACTIVE TIME: **30 min.**
TOTAL TIME: **2½ hrs.** SERVES: **12**

- 3 (6 oz.) **cans lump crabmeat,** *drained*
- ¾ **cup frozen corn,** *thawed, drained*
- ½ **cup cornflake crumbs**
- ⅓ **cup mayonnaise**
- ⅓ **cup chopped cilantro**
- 1 **egg,** *beaten*
- 2 **scallions, chopped**
- 4 **oz. pepper Jack cheese,** *shredded*

Per serving: Cal. 140 **Pro.** 9g **Carb.** 6g **Fiber** 0g **Sug.** 2g **Chol.** 60mg **Sod.** 400mg **Total fat:** 8g **Sat.** 3g

Thanks to crushed-up cornflakes, this spin on a go-to party favorite stays moist inside

1 Line rimmed baking sheet with wax paper. In bowl, combine first 7 ingredients with ¼ tsp. salt; mix in cheese. Shape into 12 (2½" wide) patties, about ¼ cup each. Transfer to baking sheet; cover with plastic wrap. Chill until firm, at least 1 hr.

2 Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry at 350°F. Coat air-fryer basket with cooking spray. In batches, place crab cakes in single layer in basket; coat with cooking spray. Air-fry until lightly browned, about 8 min. per batch.

Pair it with... **Remoulade**

This twist on a Louisiana favorite is the perfect complement to our tender morsels. To make: In small bowl, combine ½ cup mayonnaise, 1 Tbs. grainy Dijon mustard, 2 tsp. cayenne pepper sauce, 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice, 2 tsp. drained capers (chopped) and ½ tsp. salt-free Cajun seasoning.

Mozzarella Sticks

ACTIVE TIME: **25 min.**
TOTAL TIME: **35 min. + overnight.** SERVES: **12**

- ½ **cup plain dry breadcrumbs**
- ½ **cup yellow cornmeal**
- ½ **tsp. garlic powder**
- ½ **cup all-purpose flour**
- **3 eggs,** *beaten*
- **1** (12 oz.) **pkg. part-skim mozzarella string cheese**

Per serving: Cal. 150 **Pro.** 9g **Carb.** 9g **Fiber** 0g **Sug.** 0g **Chol.** 75mg **Sod.** 360mg **Total fat:** 9g **Sat.** 6g

The key to keep these treats crispy outside and gooey inside? Freeze 'em overnight before frying

1 Coat baking sheet with cooking spray. In medium bowl, combine first 3 ingredients with ¼ tsp. salt. Place flour and eggs in separate bowls. Coat string cheese in flour; dip in egg then breadcrumb mixture. Repeat twice. Transfer to baking sheet; freeze overnight.

2 Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry at 390°F. Coat air-fryer basket with cooking spray. In batches, place cheese in single layer in air fryer basket; coat with cooking spray. Air-fry until lightly browned, about 4 min. per batch.

Pair it with...
Arrabbiata

Marinara sauce with a kick, this dipping sauce brings the heat. To make: In medium pot, cook 1 tsp. minced garlic and 1 tsp. red pepper flakes in 2 Tbs. olive oil over medium heat, 30 sec. Stir in 1 (14.5 oz.) can crushed tomatoes, ¼ cup water and ¼ tsp. salt; bring to boil. On low, cook, partially covered, until flavors blend, 45 min.

Chicken Tenders

ACTIVE TIME: **20 min.**
TOTAL TIME: **40 min.** SERVES: **6**

- ⅓ **cup buffalo wing sauce**
- 1 **egg**
- ½ **cup Italian-style dry breadcrumbs**
- ¼ **cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- ¼ **cup all-purpose flour**
- 1 **lb. chicken tenders,** *cut into 2½"x1½" pieces*

Per serving: Cal. 140 **Pro.** 20g **Carb.** 8g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 1g **Chol.** 70mg **Sod.** 460mg **Total fat:** 3g **Sat.** 1g

Convenient store-bought buffalo sauce stirred into the egg mixture before dipping guarantees these juicy strips cook up loaded with flavor

1 In bowl, combine wing sauce and egg. In separate bowl, combine breadcrumbs, Parmesan and ¼ tsp. pepper. Place flour in third bowl; add chicken. Toss until coated. Dip in egg mixture then breadcrumbs, shaking off excess.

2 Heat 7-qt. air fryer to air-fry at 375°F. Coat air-fryer basket with cooking spray. In batches, place chicken in single layer in air-fryer basket; coat chicken with cooking spray. Air-fry until cooked through, 8–10 min. per batch.

Pair it with... Blue Cheese Dip

This creamy condiment gets a touch of extra tang, thanks to a dash of Worcestershire sauce and a squeeze of lemon. To make: In medium bowl, combine ⅓ cup mayonnaise, ⅓ cup buttermilk, ⅓ cup blue cheese crumbles, 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce, 1 tsp. lemon juice and ¼ tsp. garlic powder. Stir until well blended.

ADOBE STOCK (3); SHUTTERSTOCK

Save precious time with these shopping lists

FABULOUS FRIED CHICKEN DINNER

Buttermilk Fried Chicken

- ☐ 1 (3.12 oz.) cont. garlic powder
- ☐ 1 (2 lb.) pkg. all-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 (12 oz.) pkg. cornflakes cereal
- ☐ 1 (.75 oz.) cont. dried oregano
- ☐ 4 lbs. chicken pieces
- ☐ 1 (1 qt.) cont. buttermilk

Bloomin' Onion with Smoky Sauce

- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) btle. Thousand Island dressing
- ☐ 1 (6.5 oz.) jar prepared horseradish
- ☐ 1 (.9 oz.) cont. smoked paprika
- ☐ 1 (2 lb.) pkg. all-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 (6 oz.) cont. Old Bay seasoning
- ☐ 1 large sweet onion
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) carton half-and-half

Cheddar-Bacon Twice-Baked Potatoes

- ☐ 6 (8 oz.) baking potatoes
- ☐ 1 bunch fresh chives
- ☐ 1 (32 oz.) carton whole milk
- ☐ 1 (1 lb.) pkg. butter
- ☐ 1 (8 oz.) pkg. sharp cheddar
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) cont. sour cream
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) pkg. bacon

Chocolate-Raspberry Cupcakes

- ☐ 1 (2 lb.) pkg. all-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 (8 oz.) cont. unsweetened cocoa powder
- ☐ 1 (8.1 oz.) cont. baking powder
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) pkg. brown sugar
- ☐ 1 (1 oz.) btle. vanilla extract
- ☐ 1 (32 oz.) pkg. confectioners' sugar
- ☐ 1 (1 oz.) btle. red liquid food coloring
- ☐ 2 (6 oz.) conts. raspberries
- ☐ 1 (1 lb.) pkg. butter
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs
- ☐ 1 (32 oz.) carton whole milk

Kitchen staples: salt, pepper, cooking spray

SUCCULENT PORK ROAST SUPPER

Pork Loin Roast with Blood Orange Glaze

- ☐ 1 (1 lb.) pkg. granulated sugar
- ☐ 1 (12 oz.) cont. honey
- ☐ 1 (12 oz.) btle. Dijon mustard
- ☐ 1 (16.9 oz.) btle. white wine vinegar
- ☐ 1 bunch fresh rosemary
- ☐ 4 blood oranges
- ☐ 1 (3 lb.) boneless pork loin roast
- ☐ 1 (750 ml.) btle. dry white wine

Crouton-Crusted Zucchini Sticks

- ☐ 1 (5 oz.) pkg. garlic and butter croutons
- ☐ 1 (24 oz.) pkg. yellow cornmeal
- ☐ 1 (1.75 oz.) cont. cayenne pepper
- ☐ 1 (2 lb.) pkg. all-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 lemon
- ☐ 2 lbs. zucchini
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs

Savory Stuffed Mushrooms

- ☐ 1 (6 oz.) pkg. lower-sodium chicken stuffing mix
- ☐ 16 (2½") white stuffing mushrooms with stems
- ☐ 1 bunch celery
- ☐ 1 bunch scallions
- ☐ 1 bunch fresh sage
- ☐ 1 (8 oz.) pkg. fontina
- ☐ 1 (1 lb.) pkg. butter

Raspberry-Topped Cheesecake

- ☐ 1 (14.3 oz.) pkg. créme-filled chocolate sandwich cookies
- ☐ 1 (1 lb.) pkg. granulated sugar
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) cont. cornstarch
- ☐ 1 (1 oz.) btle. vanilla extract
- ☐ 1 (18 oz.) jar seedless raspberry jam
- ☐ 1 (1 lb.) pkg. butter
- ☐ 4 (8 oz.) pkgs. cream cheese
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) cont. sour cream

Kitchen staples: salt, pepper, cooking spray

GAME-DAY EATS THAT SCORE SMILES

Coconut Shrimp

- ☐ 1 (14 oz.) pkg. sweetened flaked coconut
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) pkg. seasoned panko breadcrumbs
- ☐ 1 (2.62 oz.) cont. less-sodium Old Bay seasoning
- ☐ 1 (40 oz.) cont. Bisquick baking mix
- ☐ 1 lb. peeled, deveined jumbo shrimp
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs

Corny Crab Cakes

- ☐ 1 (12 oz.) pkg. cornflakes cereal
- ☐ 1 (30 oz.) jar mayonnaise
- ☐ 2 bunches fresh cilantro
- ☐ 1 bunch scallions
- ☐ 3 (6 oz.) cans lump crabmeat
- ☐ 1 (16 oz.) pkg. frozen corn kernels
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs
- ☐ 1 (8 oz.) pkg. Pepper Jack

Mozzarella Sticks

- ☐ 1 (15 oz.) cont. plain dry breadcrumbs
- ☐ 1 (24 oz.) pkg. yellow cornmeal
- ☐ 1 (3.12 oz.) cont. garlic powder
- ☐ 1 (2 lb.) pkg. all-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs
- ☐ 1 (12 oz.) pkg, part-skim mozzarella string cheese

Chicken Tenders

- ☐ 1 (12 oz.) btle. buffalo wing sauce
- ☐ 1 (15 oz.) cont. Italian-style dry breadcrumbs
- ☐ 1 (8 oz.) cont. grated Parmesan cheese
- ☐ 1 (2 lb.) pkg. all-purpose flour
- ☐ 1 lb. chicken tenders
- ☐ 1 (dozen) carton eggs

Kitchen staples: salt, pepper, cooking spray

KEY ☐ GROCERY ☐ PRODUCE ☐ MEAT/SEAFOOD ☐ DAIRY/FROZEN ☐ LIQUOR

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❖

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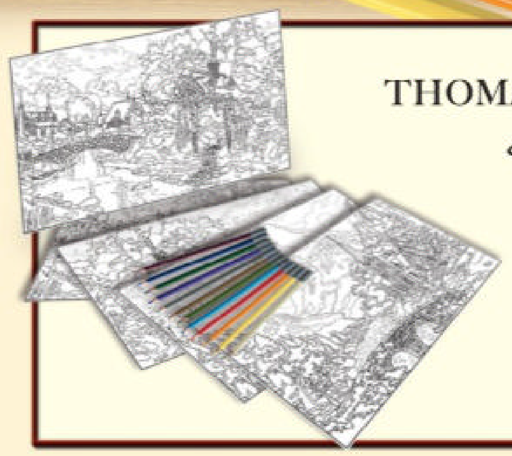

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Show your love *layers of mmm*

with

Valentine's Day is guaranteed to be even sweeter, thanks to this from-scratch treat that's extra showstopping with our easy frosting technique!

ADOBE STOCK

Red Velvet and Cream Cake

ACTIVE TIME: **45 min.** TOTAL TIME: **3½ hrs.** SERVES: **16**

- 1⅓ cups milk
- 2 Tbs. white vinegar
- 3⅓ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbs. unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- ⅔ cup butter, *at room temp.*
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 4 eggs
- 4 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 Tbs. red liquid food coloring
- 2 (8 oz.) pkgs. cream cheese, *at room temp.*
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2½ cups heavy cream

❶ Heat oven to 325°F. Coat 2 (9¼") heart-shaped cake pans or 2 (9") round cake pans with cooking spray. In small bowl, mix milk and vinegar. In separate bowl, mix flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt. On medium speed, beat butter and granulated sugar until fluffy, 2 min. On low, beat in eggs, then 2 tsp. vanilla. Alternately beat in flour and milk mixtures; stir in food coloring. Divide batter evenly between pans (if baking 1 layer at a time, leave batter at room temp. until ready to bake).

❷ Bake until toothpick inserted in centers comes out clean, about 35 min. Let cool in pans 10 min. Transfer from pans to rack; let cool.

❸ Trim each cake to 1¼" thick; halve horizontally. On medium-high, beat cream cheese and confectioners' sugar until smooth. On low, gradually beat in 1 cup heavy cream and remaining 2 tsp. vanilla until blended. Gradually beat in remaining heavy cream until smooth. On medium, beat until stiff peaks form. Transfer ¼ of filling to pastry bag fitted with ½" plain tip. Place 1 cake layer on serving plate; pipe dollops on top. Repeat 3 times with remaining cake layers and filling.

Pro secret to filling a pastry bag

Getting frosting into a pastry bag can be a messy chore—seems like more falls onto the counter than makes it into the bag, and you could use an extra pair of hands. To keep things neat and tidy, try this: Place the bag upright in a tall glass and fold the top edge over. Then simply use a spatula or spoon to transfer the frosting to the bag. The glass holds the bag in place, making it a snap to fill.

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Easy Valentine treats

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Cherry Chocolate Kiss Cookies

ACTIVE TIME: **30 min.** TOTAL TIME: **1 hr.** SERVES: **36**

1 (16.5 oz.) **pkg. sugar cookie dough**
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup drained maraschino cherries, *without stems, patted dry, chopped*
½ tsp. almond extract
36 dark chocolate Hershey's Kisses, *unwrapped*

Heat oven to 325°F. On medium speed, beat first 4 ingredients. Divide into 36 portions, about 1 Tbs. each; roll into balls. Place on ungreased baking sheets. With thumb, make indentation in centers. Bake until set, 10 min. Press 1 Kiss in center of each cookie. Let cool on baking sheets 5 min. Transfer to rack; let cool.

Per serving: Cal. 100 **Pro.** 1g **Carb.** 15g **Fiber** 0g **Sug.** 7g **Chol.** 0mg **Sod.** 75mg **Total fat:** 4g **Sat.** 2g

HEALTH BONUS

Enhance focus with dark chocolate. Compounds in the sweet treat fire up production of *dopamine,* so you feel more mental energy for 2½ hours.

Chocolate-Dipped Cereal Hearts

ACTIVE TIME: **30 min.** TOTAL TIME: **45 min.** SERVES: **18**

¼ cup butter
1 (10.5 oz.) **bag mini marshmallows**
6 cups crisp rice cereal
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 tsp. oil
Pinch of cayenne pepper

Line 13"x9" pan with foil; grease. In pot, melt butter over low heat; stir in marshmallows, then cereal. Spread in pan. Let stand 15 min. Using 2½" heart-shaped cutter, cut out shapes. In microwave-safe bowl, microwave remaining ingredients in 15-sec. intervals until smooth; dip hearts. Garnish as desired. Let stand until firm.

Per serving: Cal. 180 **Pro.** 2g **Carb.** 31g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 20g **Chol.** 5mg **Sod.** 115mg **Total fat:** 6g **Sat.** 4g

HEALTH BONUS

Erase aches with cayenne pepper. The spice brims with compounds that block pain receptors to ease migraines by 50% in 10 minutes.

Turn for more treats

FOOD & PHOTO (2); ADOBE STOCK (2)

Hearts-a-Flutter Cupcakes

ACTIVE TIME: **50 min.** TOTAL TIME: **50 min.** SERVES: **18**

- **1½ cups butter,** *at room temp.*
- **6 cups confectioners' sugar**
- **½ cup sour cream**
- **2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- **30 drops red liquid food coloring**
- **18 baked chocolate or red velvet cupcakes**

On medium speed, beat butter until creamy. On low, gradually beat in confectioners' sugar until blended. Add sour cream and vanilla; on medium-high, beat until light and fluffy. Tint 2 cups frosting dark pink and 2 cups frosting light pink. Transfer dark pink, light pink and white frostings to separate pastry bags fitted with round tips. Pipe alternate circles of white, light pink and dark pink frostings over cupcakes. Decorate as desired.

Per serving: Cal. 440 **Pro.** 2g **Carb.** 65g **Fiber** 0g **Sug.** 53g **Chol.** 70mg **Sod.** 290mg **Total fat:** 21g **Sat.** 11g

HEALTH BONUS

Quiet stress with vanilla. The sweet scent calms the brain's emotion center, the *amygdala,* to quiet nerves and anxiety in as little as 2 minutes.

Layered Strawberry Delight

ACTIVE TIME: **25 min.** TOTAL TIME: **2½ hrs.** SERVES: **6**

- **1** (3 oz.) **pkg. strawberry gelatin mix**
- **1½ cups boiling water**
- **1 cup heavy cream**
- **2 Tbs. sugar**
- **12 strawberries,** *halved*
- **⅓ cup white chocolate shavings**

In medium heatproof bowl, combine gelatin and boiling water until dissolved; let cool. On medium speed, beat heavy cream and sugar until stiff peaks form. Stir 1½ cups whipped cream into gelatin mixture; chill remaining whipped cream. Divide gelatin mixture evenly among 6 (8 oz.) glasses. Cover; chill until set, about 3 hrs. Garnish with reserved whipped cream, strawberries and white chocolate shavings.

Per serving: Cal. 310 **Pro.** 3g **Carb.** 23g **Fiber** 1g **Sug.** 22g **Chol.** 70mg **Sod.** 75mg **Total fat:** 23g **Sat.** 15g

HEALTH BONUS

Tame tiredness with strawberries. Nutrients in these gems prompt the body to burn fatty acids for fuel, which shakes off fatigue for 3 hours.

ADOBE STOCK; ARE MEDIA; HBB; SHUTTERSTOCK

smart FOOD *solutions*

Quick tips to help make cooking stress-free

PRO SECRET

Katie's hidden-goodness burgers with 81% more fiber

Chef Katie Lee sneaks oats, beans and veggies into patties for a nutrient-boosted burger. To make: Cook ½ cup each of diced onion, grated carrot and grated broccoli, 1 tsp. each of chili powder and garlic powder and ½ tsp. of cumin in olive oil over medium heat for 5 minutes. Mix with 1 lb. of ground beef, ½ cup of oat flour, ½ cup of black bean puree, 1 Tbs. of Worcestershire sauce and 1 egg. Shape into 6 patties. Cook in olive oil over medium heat, 3 minutes per side.

Katie Lee

smart swap!

- ⊕ **Fiber grams added:** 4
- ⊖ **Calories cut:** 190
- ⊖ **Fat grams cut:** 9

Numbers reflect burgers made with vegetables instead of just meat

Freezing heat-and-eat casseroles? Try this!

Stocking the freezer with casseroles is a terrific time-saver, but big dishes hog up space. The save: Line the pan with foil before layering in ingredients, then freeze as usual. Once the food is frozen, lift the slab out of the pan, wrap with more foil and return to the freezer. When ready to bake, just remove foil and place casserole back in dish.

Easiest-ever French toast

When making French toast for a crowd, save time—and make the dish healthier—with this trick: Layer bread in a baking dish, pour custard on top and bake for 40 minutes at 350°F. You'll have a creamy-inside, crispy-outside French toast casserole. And since the bread isn't fried, you'll cut 5 grams of fat per serving!

Protect fingers while grating vegetables

To avoid grating your fingers right along with your carrots, zucchini, potatoes or beets, try this hack: When you've grated the vegetable down to a small piece, stick a fork in it and use the utensil to help you grate the rest. The fork will hold the veggie steady without putting your fingers in harm's way.

Toss-together terrific: Turkey chili in half the time!

In skillet, brown 1 lb. ground turkey

+

Add 1 (15 oz.) can chili beans

+

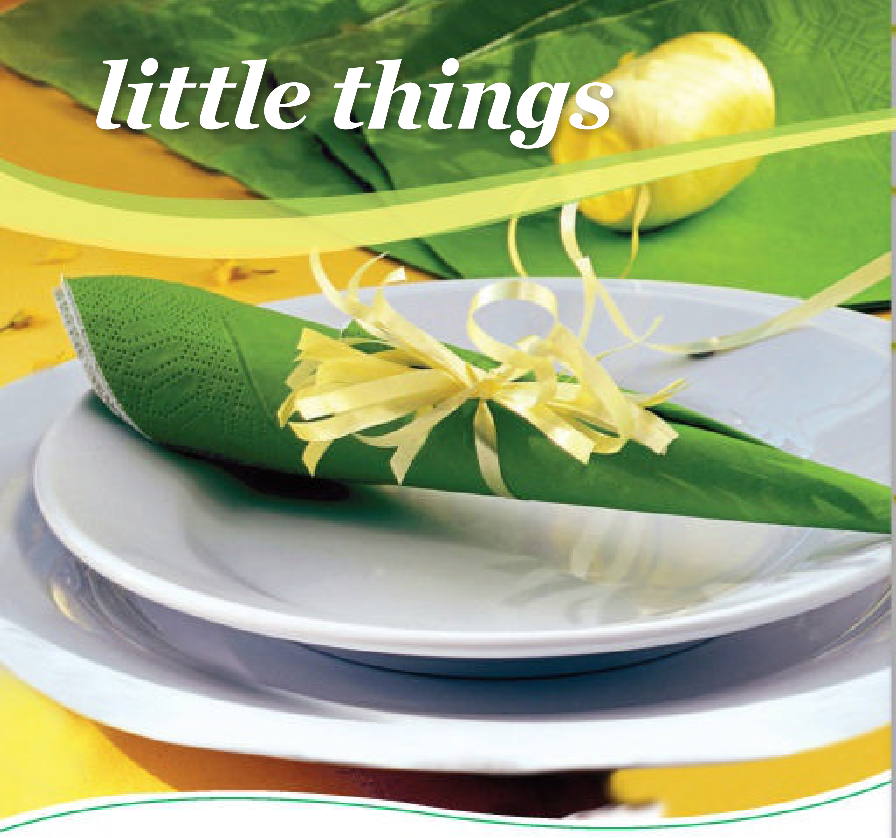
Add 1 (15 oz.) can fire-roasted diced tomatoes

=

Simmer until warmed through, 10 min.

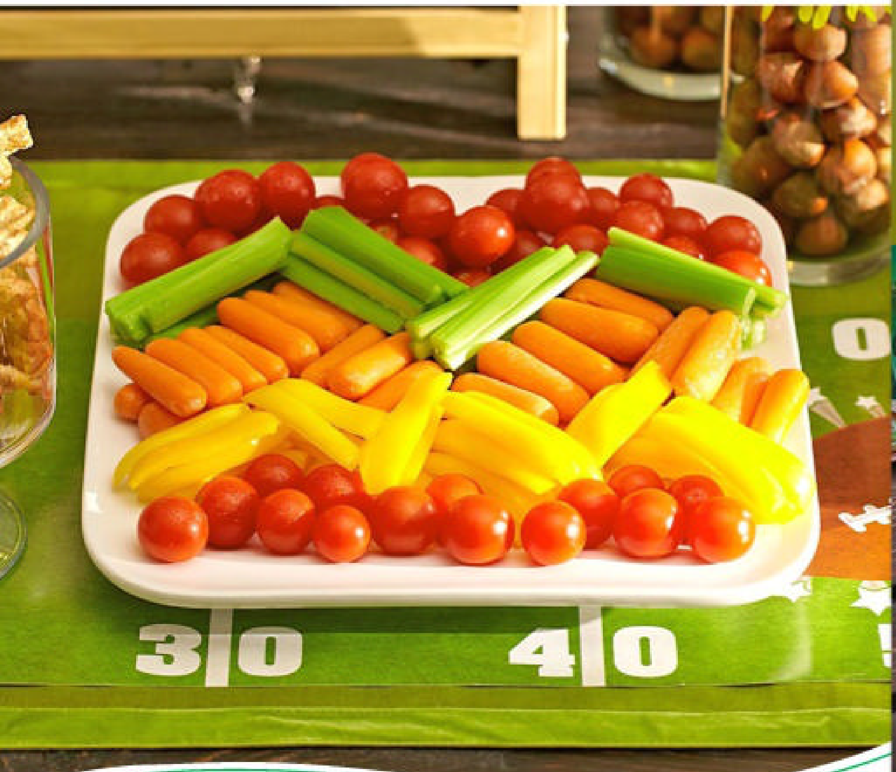
STARTRAKS; ADOBE STOCK (3); FOOD & PHOTO (2); SHUTTERSTOCK (2). TEXT: EMILY BOYETTE

Wow them *game-day*



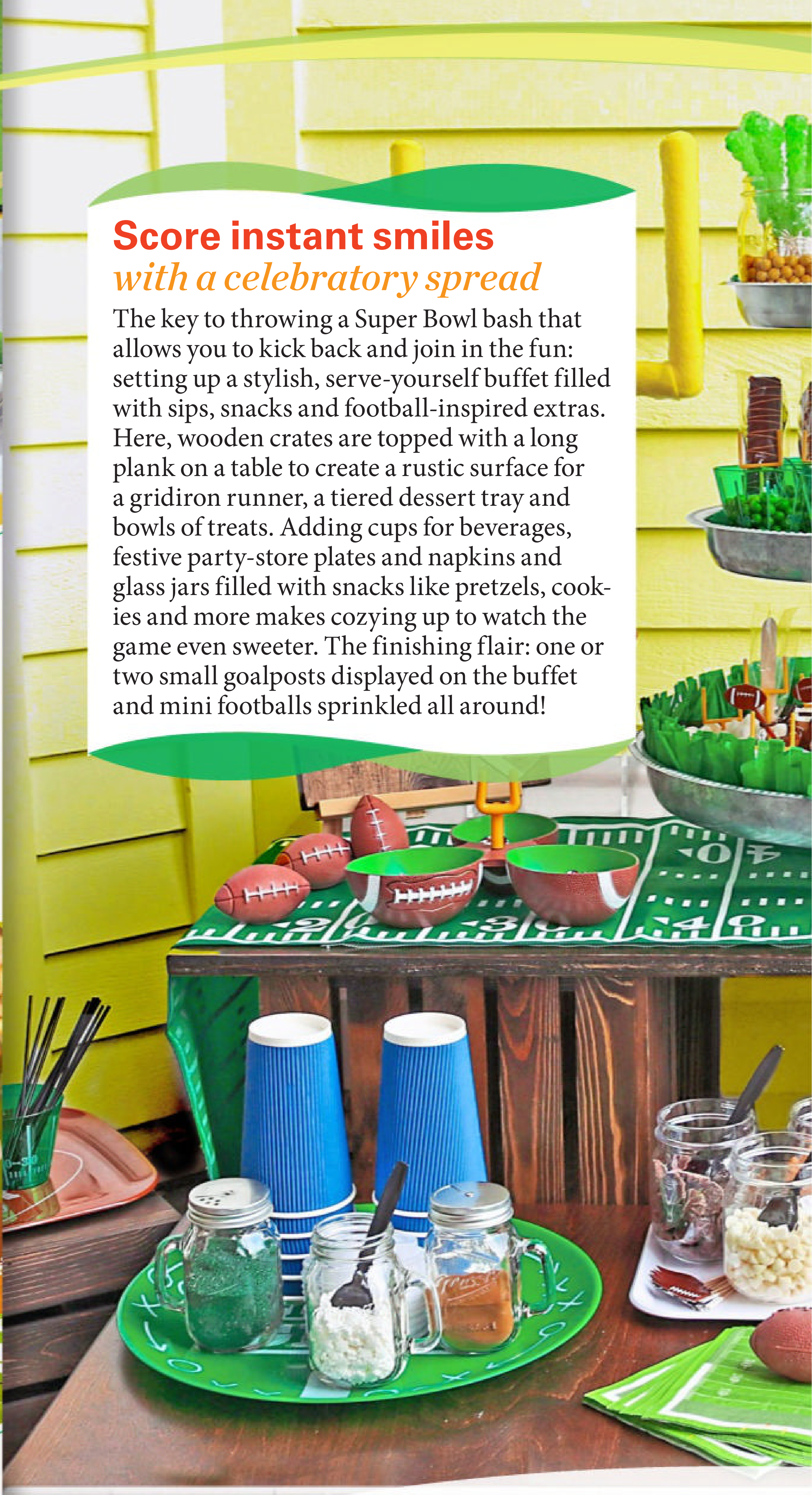
Pep up utensils
with a cheery napkin wrap

Loved ones will cheer when they see these cute cutlery bundles kissed with yellow “pom-pom” ribbon cuffs. ***To do:*** Place cutlery in the center of a green paper napkin, then roll the napkin into a cone shape. Snip 12 lengths of yellow curling ribbon to 4", stack together and cinch in the center with more curling ribbon; tie around the napkin cone and knot to secure.



Collect compliments
with a stylish veggie sampler

A colorfully crowd-pleasing tray of crudités becomes trophy-worthy when arranged in a chic design! ***To do:*** Arrange baby carrots in a wide “M” shape at the center of a 12" square platter. Arrange celery sticks above and bell pepper strips below carrots in “M” shapes. Fill space at the top and bottom with cherry tomatoes.



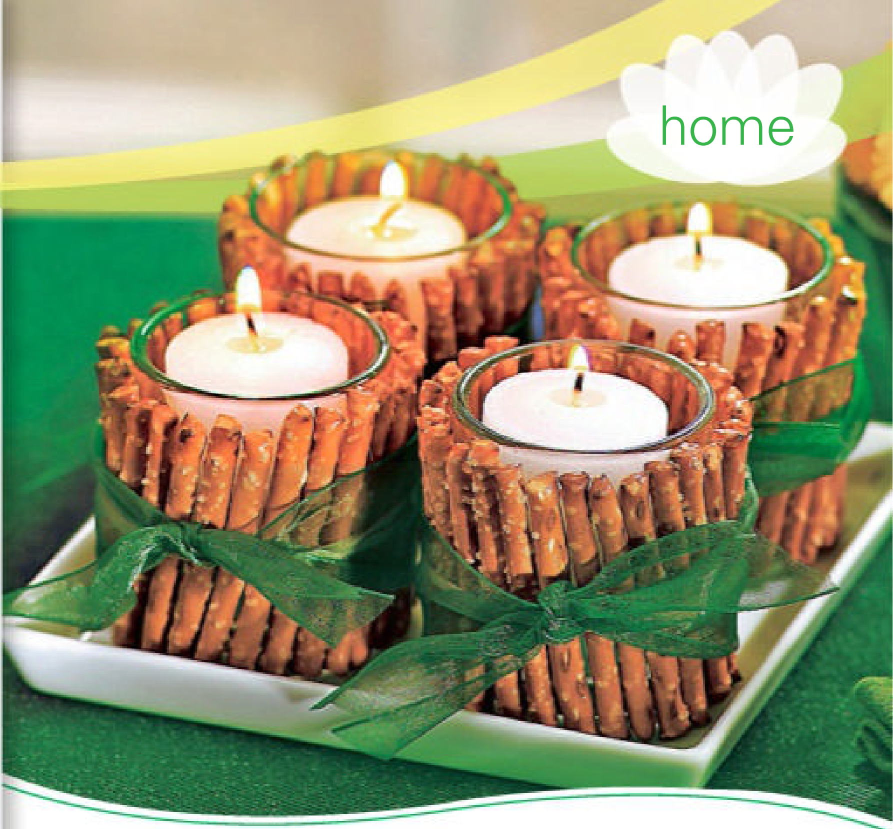
Score instant smiles
with a celebratory spread

The key to throwing a Super Bowl bash that allows you to kick back and join in the fun: setting up a stylish, serve-yourself buffet filled with sips, snacks and football-inspired extras. Here, wooden crates are topped with a long plank on a table to create a rustic surface for a gridiron runner, a tiered dessert tray and bowls of treats. Adding cups for beverages, festive party-store plates and napkins and glass jars filled with snacks like pretzels, cookies and more makes cozying up to watch the game even sweeter. The finishing flair: one or two small goalposts displayed on the buffet and mini footballs sprinkled all around!

Table styled by Josefina Martinez, party stylist and founder of Dream and Party LLC (DreamAndParty.com)

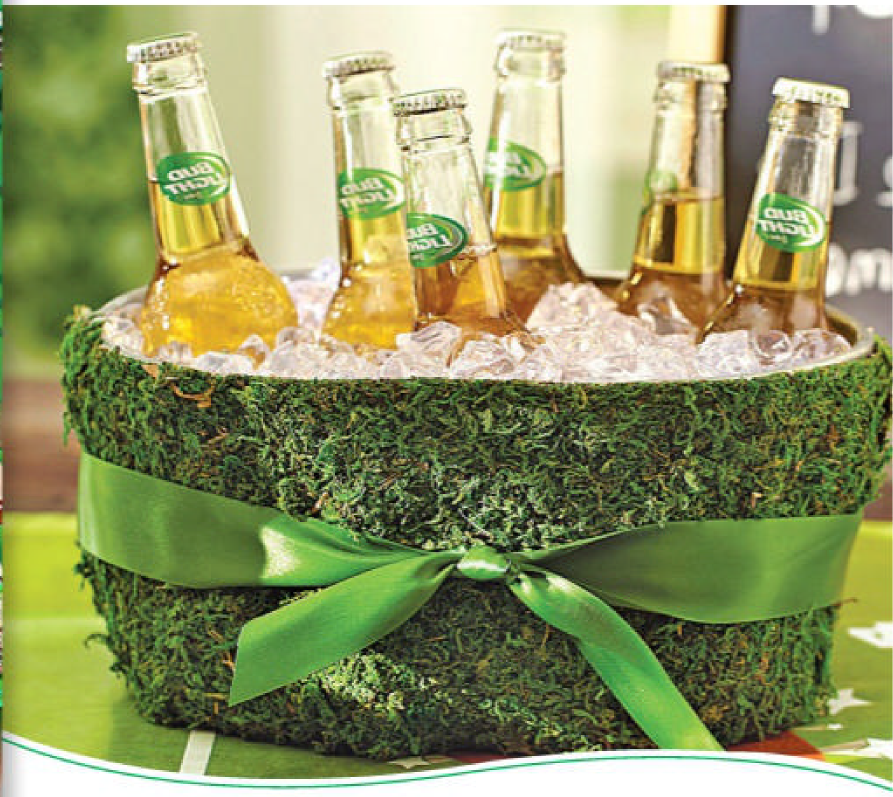
PAUL JOHNSON (2); FLORA PRESS; HBB; ADOBE STOCK. TEXT: LAUREN BLUM

with a buffet!



Add twinkling charm
with pretty pretzel candles

A few handfuls of pretzels and ribbon transform plain votive candle cups into snack-themed twinklers! ***To do:*** For each, place a rubber band around a glass votive candle cup. Slip pretzel sticks under the band until glass is covered. Hide the band by wrapping with green ribbon, then tie into a bow. Add four finished twinklers to a small square tray and display.

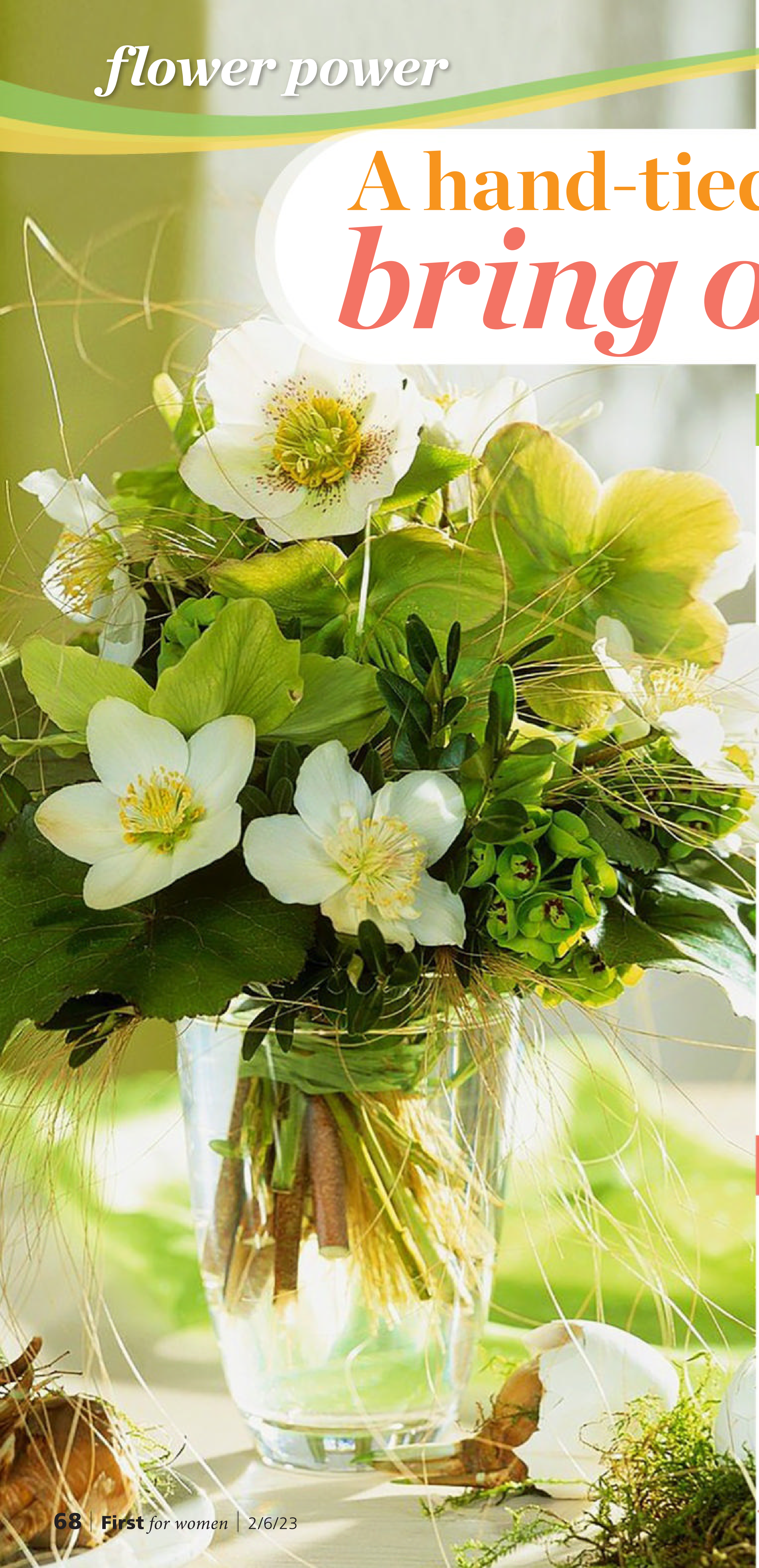


Simplify serving
with a 'home turf' cooler

A turf-inspired ice bucket keeps drinks cold and within reach! ***To do:*** Wrap the outside of a galvanized tub with a cut-to-fit length of sheet moss; hot-glue to secure. Knot a green ribbon around the tub and add ice and drinks.

SECRET SOURCE: SuperMoss Instant Green All-Purpose Moss Mat, $20, Michaels.com

A hand-tied bunch to *bring on joy!*



WHAT'S NEW

Right now, florists are styling delicate seasonal blooms in sweet, hand-tied bouquets, and the results are charming! "Here, soft green and white hellebores mix with foliage and grasses for a textural, foraged look," says floral pro Maureen White-Goeman of Maureen's Designs in Chelsea, Michigan. "And the clear vase shows off the stems, furthering the natural feel. It instantly perks up any winter table!"

GET THE LOOK

Fill a 5"-tall clear vase or drinking glass with water. Snip 6 stems each of green and white hellebores and a few handfuls of leafy greenery to 7" to 10". Next, gather a handful of long, wispy grasses from the yard. Arrange the stems in your hand, twirling as you add blooms, greenery and grasses, one at a time, at a 45-degree angle so stems form a spiral. Tie with green raffia to secure and add the bouquet to the vase.

INSIDER'S SECRET

Hellebores need proper hydration in order to stay lively in a fresh arrangement. To ensure your blooms are getting enough water, simply slice the bottom inch of stems lengthwise to maximize water uptake. Also smart: Mix 2 Tbs. of vodka with 1 quart of water and pour into the vase each day when you change the water. Alcohol wards off any bacteria that could threaten the life span of the blooms.

LINES + ANGLES. TEXT: LAUREN BLUM

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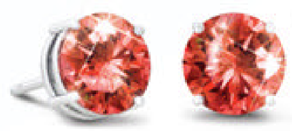

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smart HOME solutions

Quick tips that save time and money

Clever way to store & pour flour

Recipes that call for flour often result in scooping-related powder clouds all over your countertop. The secret to keeping the baking staple from getting everywhere: Put the bag in a cereal container! The easy-pour opening will help control the flour's flow, while the container itself will catch any excess that may fall out of the bag. Plus, the sealable container will ensure the kitchen staple stays fresh when not in use.

QUICK POLL

How do you nix boot-tray puddles?

A boot tray keeps your floor clear of snow, but it also leaves your boots sitting in water. Here, readers' fixes:

73% ❤ this idea!

Put an old cooling rack on top of the tray; place boots on top, says Alicia Ross. It keeps boots out of water and lets air flow so they can dry fast.

27% ❤ this idea!

Line the bottom of the tray with wine corks, says Melinda Cobb. The porous corks will absorb excess water in the tray.

Deodorize a disposal

Eek! Company is due soon and your garbage disposal is emitting a foul odor. The quick save: Toss the peel of an orange down the drain and run the appliance for 30 seconds. Acids in the fruit will neutralize the stink, the coarse rind will scour away any built-up food and the citrus will add a fresh scent! *Ahh,* that's better!

The iron-free trick that smooths wrinkles—*fast!*

You're late for an appointment and the blouse you wanted to wear is all creased. Instead of waiting for the iron to heat up, let your hair dryer double as a steamer! Simply spritz the blouse with a little water and, with the blow-dryer on high heat, blast air at the blouse while smoothing creases with your hand. It will be wrinkle-free in no time.

MONEY SAVER

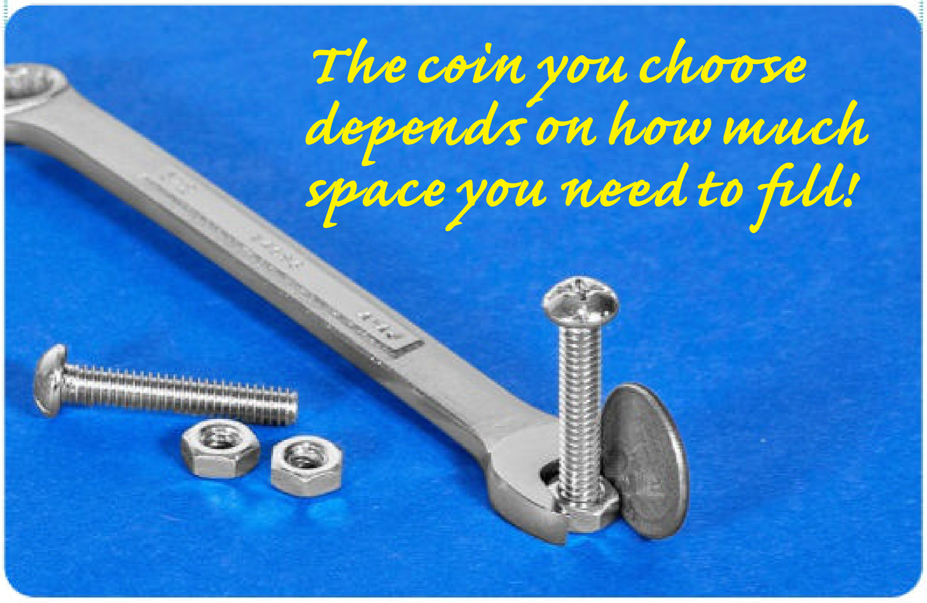
Fill wall holes for pennies

Left with an unsightly nail hole after taking down an old painting? Skip a trip to the store for spackle with this trick: Mix equal parts cornstarch and salt, add enough water to form a paste; smooth into the hole, then sand once dry. The mix will bind to the plaster to fill the hole, and the salt will keep bugs from nibbling on the cornstarch.

MONEY SAVED: $5 on spackle

SHOW-HOW

A coin helps a small screw fit perfectly into a large wrench


The coin you choose depends on how much space you need to fill!

READER TIP

Store belts *this* way

"Sick and tired of digging through my closet each time I needed to find a belt that best matched my outfit, I decided it was time to invest in an accessories rack. Until a friend passed along a great idea: Roll up the belts and store them in a clean coffee can. Not only does it easily fit on my closet shelf, but the round can helps hold the belts' shape."

—Ida Conner, Des Moines

SHUTTERSTOCK; DEANN BERGER (2). TEXT: SHAY TROTTER

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10 brilliant uses for CLUB SODA

1 Whip up extra-fluffy pancakes

Whether you're feeding the family, serving brunch to guests or enjoying a tasty breakfast solo, the secret to serving up the fluffiest of pancakes? Substituting the water or milk required in your favorite pancake recipe with club soda! The soda's tiny bubbles will hold their shape in the batter to yield extra-fluffy flapjacks every time. *Yum!*

2 Unclog a stuck drain for less

Instead of using pricey chemical solutions to remedy a slow-draining sink, combine 2 cups of club soda with 2 Tbs. of salt and pour the mix down the drain. After a minute, follow up with a kettleful of boiling water. The soda and abrasive salt dissolve grime while the water washes it away.

3 Save newspaper clippings

A little one in your life got featured in the local paper and you want to scrapbook the clipping. The trick to preserving it: Dissolve a milk of magnesia tablet in 1 liter of club soda and refrigerate overnight. The next day, stir well, then soak the clipping in the solution for 1 hour. The ingredients will safely and gently deactivate the paper's acids so it doesn't yellow later.

4 Deodorize a pet stain

Eek! Buster had an accident on the carpet and you worry that if he catches a whiff of the spot, even after cleaning, he'll go there again. To break the cycle without shelling out for pricey sprays, simply saturate the area with club soda. Let it sit for 5 minutes, then blot with paper towels. Minerals in the drink deodorize the spot so Buster won't sniff it out.

5 Get, shiny gorgeous hair

The secret to silky, healthy-looking locks? Club soda! Simply shampoo and rinse as usual, then pour a cup of the soda over your hair. Immediately follow with a cool-water rinse. *Sodium bicarbonate* in the drink will eliminate any built-up residue for soft, shiny hair in minutes.

6 Green up fading houseplants

Houseplant looking less than lush? Club soda can help. Just let the water go flat first (the carbon dioxide will stunt a plant's growth), then pour into the pot. Minerals like *sodium citrate* and *disodium phosphate* enrich the soil, encouraging healthy, green growth!

GETTY; SHUTTERSTOCK (3); HBB (2). TEXT: SHAY TROTTER

7 Get a rusty screw to turn

Argh! You finally found time to replace the towel bar in your bathroom, but one of the screws is rusted and it won't budge. The quick save: Pour club soda on the hardware and let it sit for 5 minutes, then twist again with the screwdriver. Carbon dioxide in the soda reacts with rust to bubble it away, so you can turn the screw with ease.

8 Lift tea stains from mugs

A hot cup of tea is your go-to drink on chilly days. The only problem? The tannins in the tea usually leave a noticeable brown tinge on the inside of your white mug. Rather than waste time endlessly trying to scrub it away, try this hands-off trick: Pour club soda into the mug and let it sit overnight. The acids in the soda will dissolve the stain so it can be rinsed away with water in the morning.

9 Calm an upset stomach

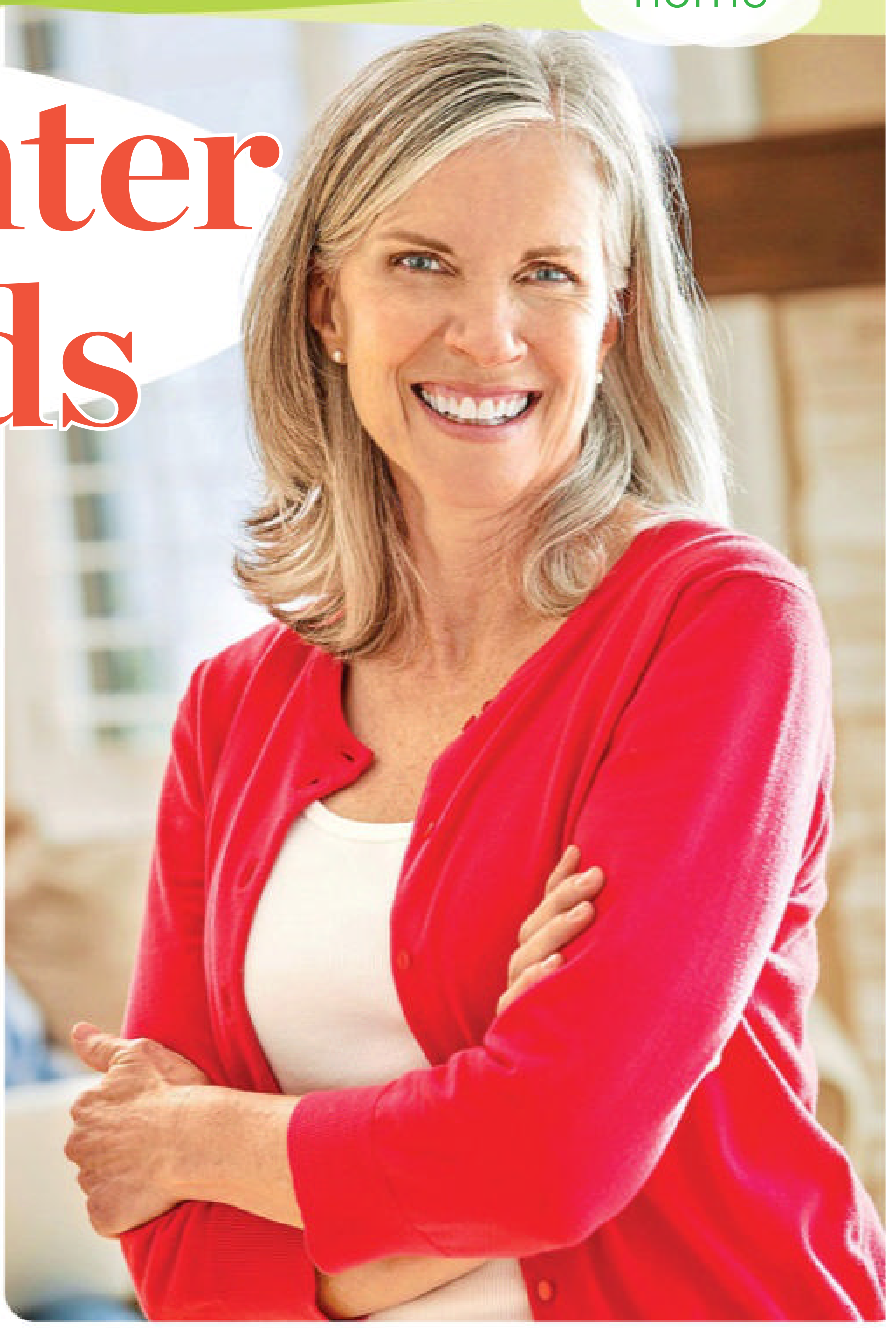
Ouch! That slice of pizza was pure heaven last night, but you woke up with a sour stomach as a result. Get instant relief by sipping on a little club soda. The *sodium bicarbonate* in the soft drink can help neutralize stomach acid while the carbonation will encourage burping to relieve pressure in the stomach. You'll be feeling better in a flash.

10 Wipe away prints from stainless steel

Your new stainless steel refrigerator looks great—if only it weren't always covered in smudges! The low-cost way to get the appliance sparkling again: Dampen a soft, clean cloth with club soda and use it to buff the surface. Wipe dry with another clean cloth. Carbonated molecules in the soft drink will fizz away the grime without leaving behind any spots.

Sidestep winter home hazards

While the weather outside is frightful, you can ensure you're safe on the inside. Here, clever ways to outsmart cold-season challenges



Prevent chimney fires *with this wood*

Wood stoves and fireplaces cause more than 4,000 fires a year. And one of the top culprits is *creosote,* the unburned hydrocarbons in wood. "Creosote is highly flammable," explains Russ Dimmitt of the Chimney Safety Institute of America (CSIA). "And the substance can build up when wood is too 'wet.'" The fix: When buying it, look for wood labeled "seasoned"—this means it's been dried out for at least a year. Using your own? You can tell if it's seasoned when the bark is loose and the logs' ends are cracked.

Also smart: Avoid tossing paper into your fireplace. Wrapping paper, cardboard and newspaper can create too much heat, leading to a fire.

Avoid burst pipes *with a slow drip*

When it's below freezing, water expands and contracts. And if your pipes aren't protected, they may burst or freeze shut, confirms plumber Simon Seys of PlumbingInstantFix.com. "But water that's constantly moving won't freeze, so just leave a cold water tap slowly dripping in one of your sinks." You can also buy insulators for pipes at any home improvement store—they look like pool noodles, easily slip on and cost about $1 each.

Also smart: Keep your house at 65°F or higher when temperatures drop below zero. And open cabinet doors under sinks in your bathroom and kitchen to allow heated air from your home to circulate around the pipes and keep them warm.

Ward off flooding *with 'salt socks'*

Snow and ice are tough on your roof, particularly if an ice dam forms. This happens when warm air escaping the uppermost part of your roof causes snow to melt, which then refreezes by the time it gets to the lower part of the roof. This forms an ice barrier that can pull gutters off your house and can result in flooding inside of it. The simple solution, says roofer Matt Wooldridge of Invision Roofing: "Fill a few old socks with road salt and toss them 5 to 6 inches away from the roof edge along the dam—they'll dissolve the ice fast."

Also smart: Since heat escaping the attic leads to ice dams, spreading a few boxes along the floor traps warm air below. ❋

Dodge common outdoor cold *arghs*

Outsmart falls with kitty litter

If your sidewalk looks like an ice rink and you have no rock salt, spread non-clumping kitty litter or sand to create instant traction and prevent folks from falling!

Remove snow with a broom

Make swift work of snow on top of your car by grabbing a push broom. Its long handle lets you nudge the fluffy stuff off, and it won't scratch your paint like a shovel can.

Warm locks with hand sanitizer

Sanitizer's alcohol content lowers the freezing point of water and comes in handy if bad weather causes the locks on your front door or garage to freeze solid. Just rub a bit of sanitizer on your key, then work it into the lock to help the lock to thaw and turn.

GETTY. TEXT: LINDSAY BOSSLETT

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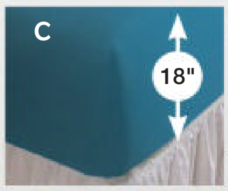

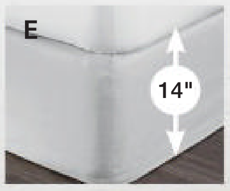

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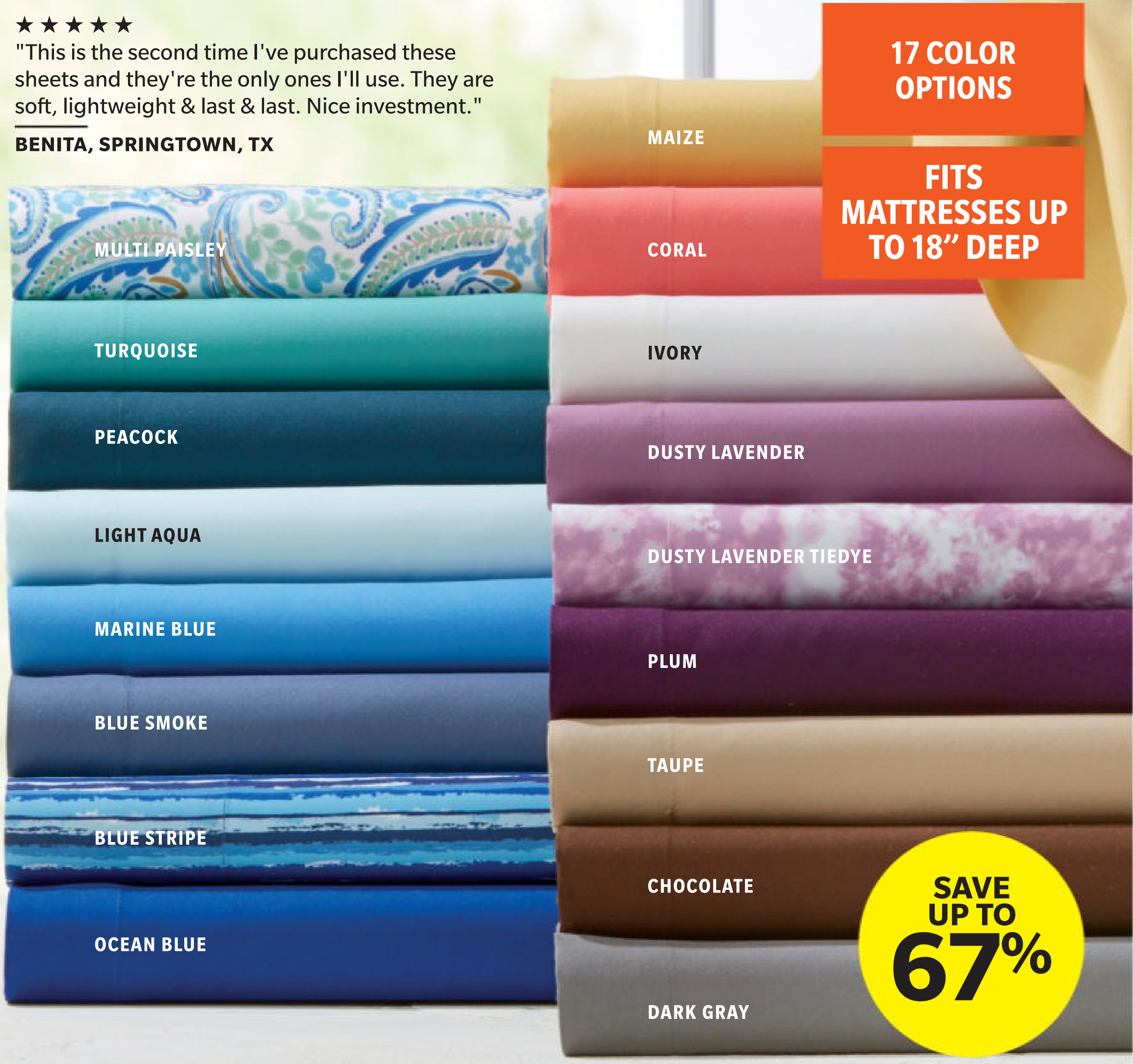

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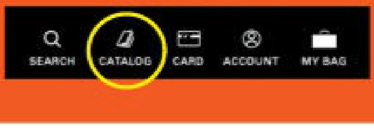

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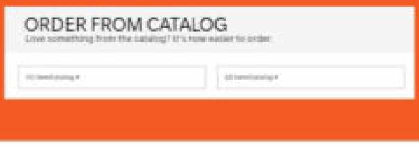
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Timely key to *big savings*

The secret that saving-savvy pros swear by in order to nab the best prices on everything from groceries to electronics? Check the calendar before you shop for...

Groceries

Go Wednesdays for double the deals

"Most grocery stores release new savings circulars on Wednesday, while still honoring the prior week's deals, doubling the items you'll be able to find on sale. And since most people do their shopping on Sunday, chances are the grocery store won't be as crowded on Wednesday, so you can snag deals with ease. To find the best sales, download the Flipp app (Flipp.com), which puts all weekly circulars in one place." *—Andrea Woroch, money-saving expert at AndreaWoroch.com*

Clothing

Shop Thursday nights to nab low prices

"Mall stores generally have big blowout sales on the weekends—their busiest time. What many shoppers don't know? Retailers tend to place their sale signage on Thursday evenings to have it in place when doors open on Friday. This means that you'll not only be able to take advantage of the sale early but you'll be privy to a bigger selection of items before the busy weekend shopping crowd hits."

—Janet Alvarez, money-saving expert at Wisebread.com

Gas

Fill up on Mondays to pay less

"Energy markets—which help determine the wholesale price of oil—are closed over the weekend, and gas station owners usually base the price of their gas on market prices once the they reopen on Mondays. But as the week goes on, if station owners see the price of oil rising, they raise their prices in return. And since research shows that most folks get their gas on Thursday and Friday, that means they're paying higher prices. Fill up on Monday instead, and you can end up paying up to 10 cents less per gallon."

—Patrick De Haan, lead petroleum analyst for the GasBuddy app

Bulk buys

Visit Mondays to score 50% off

"Warehouse stores have pretty generous return policies, and weekends are their busiest times. Rather than sending returns back to vendors or liquidators, stores like Costco and Sam's Club both devote a few shelves to the marked-down items, typically found at the back of the store. Show up on a Monday, and you'll find a plethora of new options waiting! You might even be able to snag brand-new products with packaging that has been damaged, but the savings—up to 50% off—make it worth the purchase!"

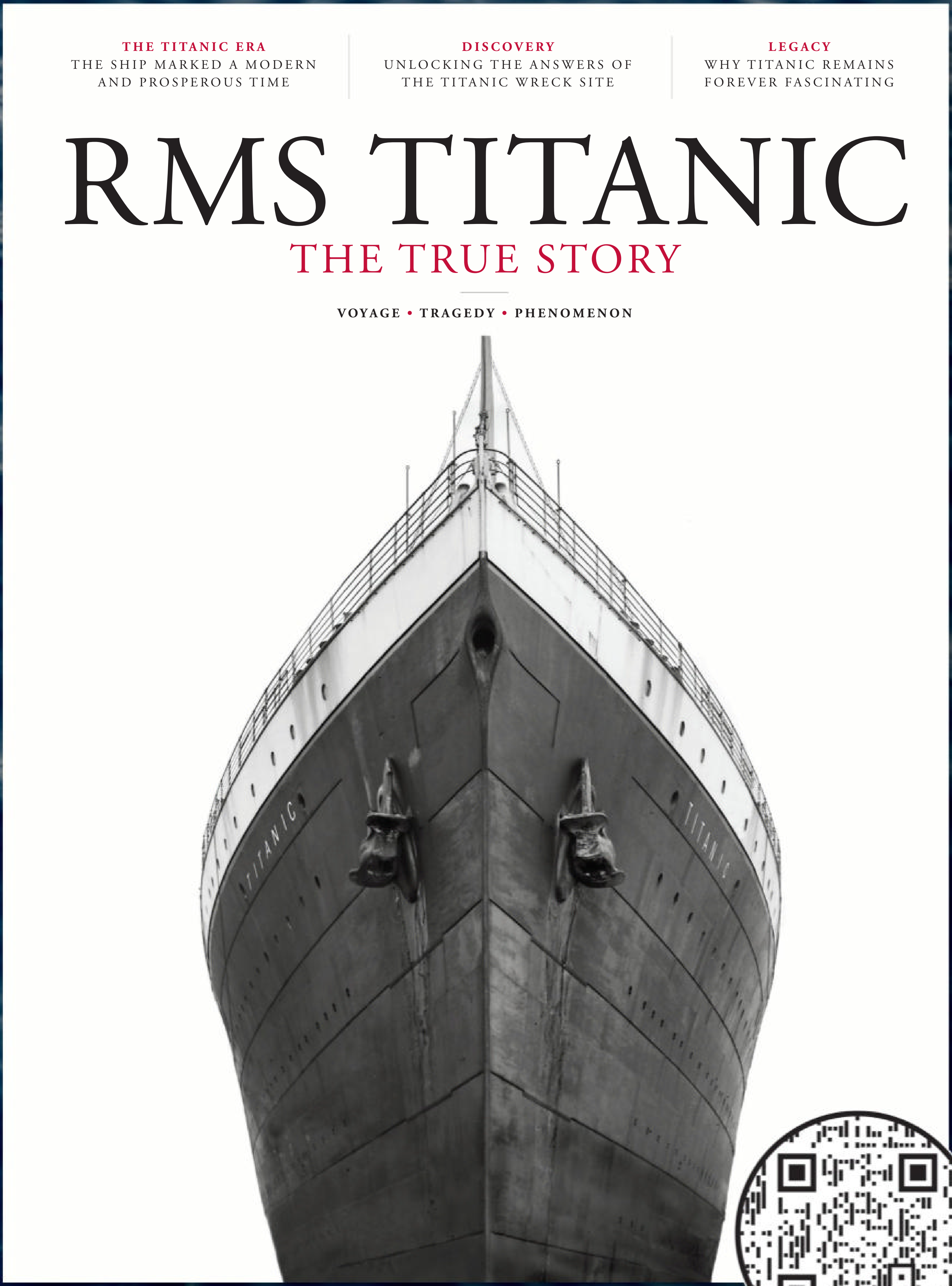
—Mary Potter Kenyon, author of Coupon Crazy: The Science, the Savings, and the Stories Behind America's Extreme Obsession

Electronics

Buy at month's end to save $$

"At most electronics stores, the sales associates have to meet certain goals at the end of the month—a time they're most willing to negotiate in order to make the sale. To help negotiate, look for open-box products or display items and ask for discounts based on superficial damage. Also, bundle items like a coffee maker and computer keyboard and ask for 10% off—that's $20 off a $200 purchase." *—Kyle James, founder of Rather-be-Shopping.com*

GETTY; SHUTTERSTOCK (2). TEXT: LORRAINE SULLIVAN



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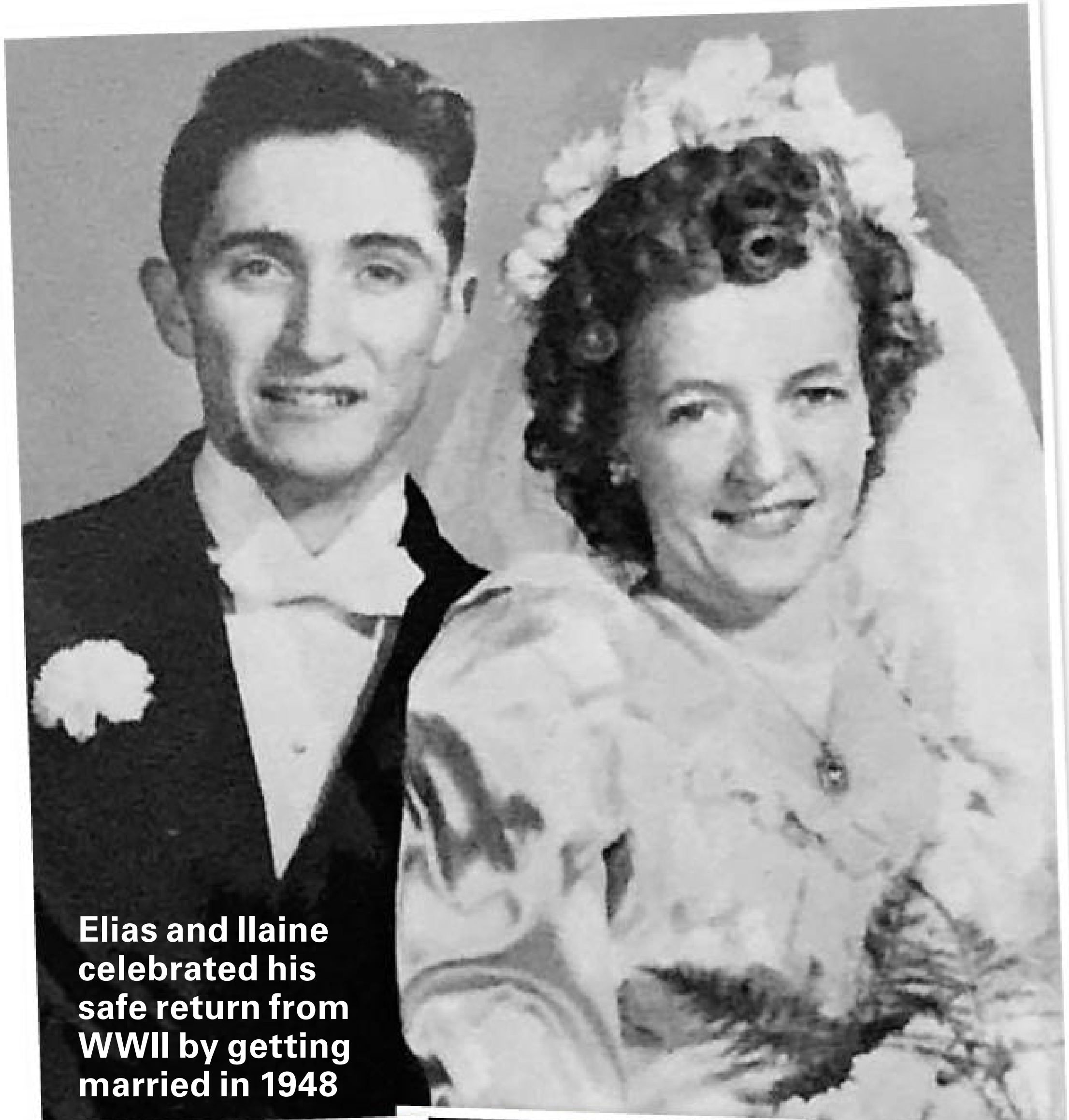
"We restored old love rightful place"

When Lindsy Wolke and Megan Grant stumbled upon an old packet of World War II love letters in a thrift shop, they made it their mission to return them to the couple's children



Elias and Ilaine celebrated his safe return from WWII by getting married in 1948

◀ Lindsy and Megan found 21 love letters Elias and Ilaine had exchanged, each filled with details about their lives and deep love

"Ma'am, may we look in here?" Lindsy Wolke asked the Gatlinburg, Tennessee, antiques store clerk as she and her friend Megan Grant peered into a locked cabinet at a trove of World War II memorabilia.

"Look, letters!" Megan said, as the clerk opened the cabinet. Carefully, Megan picked up the packet and slid a letter from an envelope postmarked November 1944, Blackwood, New Jersey. It was from a woman named Ilaine Murray to her "Navy sweetheart," Elias Maxwell.

Hiya, honey. How are you? I received two letters today from you, hon, and you can just imagine how good I feel. Ilaine ended with lines of X's for kisses and wrote, *All of these and millions more.*

Their hearts melting, Lindsy and Megan read another letter and quickly became transfixed by the romance unfolding in the missives. So much so, the two women bought all 21 of the letters.

Each page was filled with descriptions of life at war and on the home front—and Elias and Ilaine's deep love for each other.

Always thinking of you, hon, no matter where you may be. Lots of love and kisses.

"That's the last one!" sighed Lindsy, folding up a letter from Ilaine to Elias in 1946. Did Elias come home? Did he and Ilaine ever get married?

"We have to find out," said Megan.

"And we have to get these letters back to them—or their families!" Lindsy agreed.

A heartfelt mission

Lindsy's mom loved poking around on Ancestry.com and agreed to see what she could find out. Almost immediately, she came upon Elias' obituary from 1993. Lindsy and Megan felt a pang of sadness. But their hearts lifted when Lindsy's mom told them that Ilaine was listed as his wife. *They did get married!* the friends swooned. They also learned the lovebirds had four children.

Lindsy found two on Facebook, but neither responded to her message. So she posted pictures of the letters on a Facebook group dedicated to unique items that people found in thrift stores.

Shutterstock (3)

letters to their

The post got thousands of likes and caught the eye of a friend of one of Ilaine and Elias' children, Barbara Maxwell Murray. Barbara had seen Lindsy's original message but thought it had been a scam. Now, staring at the photo of the envelopes, her breath caught. *That's Mom's writing!*

Barbara messaged Lindsy, which led to a phone call.

Barbara told Lindsy that after her dad returned from the war, he and her mom had married in 1948. "They had a happy life. We miss them both very much," Barbara said, explaining they'd also lost their mom in 2010 to Alzheimer's.

Sadly, a reverse mortgage with outrageous fees had led to their home's foreclosure. "The contents were sold off before we could remove boxes of memories from the basement," Barbara shared. "We had no idea the letters even existed."

"Megan and I want to get them back to you," Lindsy told Barbara, excitedly. And Barbara was touched and stunned when Lindsy told her, "They're too precious to mail. We'll drive to New Jersey and deliver them."

A truly happy ending

"You're our angels," Barbara cried, wiping tears and presenting Lindsy and Megan with cardinal bracelets identical to those all the Maxwell girls wear to remember their parents.

Then Barbara and her siblings took Lindsy and Megan on a tour of Blackwood. They even got to visit Ilaine and Elias's home, which Barbara's daughter had bought back.

"We already felt like we knew Elias and Ilaine but to be in their hometown, we felt a real connection to them," says Lindsy.

> **"To get to see my parents when they were young and in love…I'm so grateful"**

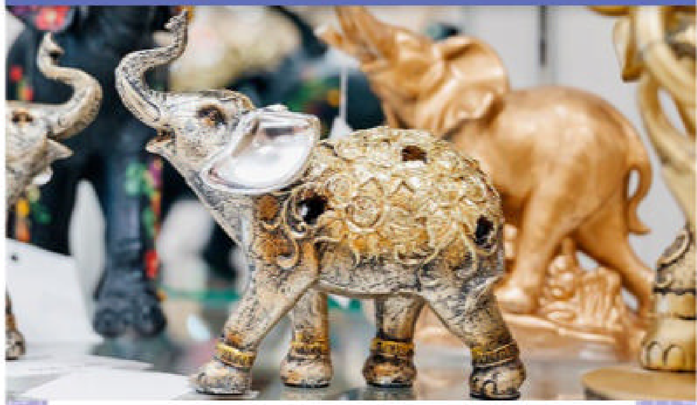
"It was incredible," Megan echoes. Barbara and her family agree.

"To have a piece of my parents, to see what their life was like when they were young and in love…I'm just so grateful," Barbara beams. "If Mom and Dad were here, my mom would be blushing, but my dad would be saying, 'How about that?!' and do a little tap dance. Just goes to show, love finds a way!" *—Michelle Abrams*

High school sweethearts, their love remained strong during Elias' 4-year stint in the Navy

Lindsy *(far left)* and Megan *(far right)* returning the letters to the couple's 4 children

3 ways to discover the story behind *your* treasures!



1 Identify special markings

Whether it's jewelry, glassware or pottery, most items have a tiny marking representing the manufacturer or maker's name. Once you've spotted a specific marking on your item, you can track down more information in a "marks dictionary" at your local library or on the internet by typing in a description of the mark.

2 Browse antiques guides

Research your antiques using the free price guide at Kovels.com. Type in a description of the item, but keep your search specific to narrow down results. Then sift through results until you find a corresponding item. From there, you'll see the current value and a description and how much it's being sold for on other websites.

3 Connect with experts

Create an account at Antiquers.com to join online discussions about vintage finds. Post photos and details and allow others to comment with information they may know about your item's past. Even better: If you have a Facebook account, join the group called "Weird Second-Hand Finds that Just Need to be Shared," which is the group Lindsy and Megan used to post Elias and Ilaine's love letters!

Angels among us

Traditions are forever

"After my beloved husband, Paul, died of a sudden stroke, each day was excruciating. I barely got through the holidays, only to face my first Super Bowl Sunday without him. For 43 years, we'd watched the big game together in our FOOTBALL FANATIC shirts. We'd choose teams, and I'd even bake a football-shaped cake with a candle in it so he could make a wish that his team would win before he'd blow it out.

"Lost and beyond lonely, I put on his shirt, turned on the game, set the cake on the coffee table and lit the candle. 'My wish is that you were still here,' I uttered. Suddenly, the flame flickered and went out. The air in the room was still. No windows were open. In awe, I gasped and eased into a comforted smile.

"'Let's play ball,' I said, joyful to know that my teammate was still here after all."

—Colleen Shultz, 70, Cranston, RI

4 stories that will warm your heart

Circle of kindness

Special delivery

"I have to admit, since my divorce nine years ago, Valentine's Day has held very little meaning. I'd ignore the mushy commercials, the stores filled with pink everything, the heart-shaped boxes of candy. So when my doorbell rang on February 13 last year, and a woman from the town's florist said she had a delivery for me, I had to chuckle.

"'I'm sorry to say that I have no sweetheart to send me roses,' I told her. 'I think you have the wrong address.' She checked her notes and apologized in embarrassment, seeing it was for the house across the street.

"The next morning, on Valentine's Day, I went to get the paper. As I stepped onto my stoop, I found a lovely bouquet of red roses with a card that read: *Everybody deserves to feel special on Valentine's Day. Enjoy!*

"I couldn't help but smile. 'I think I will,' I whispered, smelling the petals."

—Maddie Davis, 63,
Morgantown, WV

Country wisdom

Letters from the heart

"My mom had been a widow for decades, so when I was helping her clean her closet and came across a box labeled *LOVE LETTERS,* I asked if they were from my dad. She simply smiled and took the box from me, leading me to sit with her on the bed.

"'My mother always taught me that love is the greatest gift of all,' she said. 'Especially when it's given to yourself.'

"Puzzled, I began reading the letters, neatly written on lovely stationery, and saw they were to my mom—*from* my mom. Each was a celebration of her.

"In one, she praised herself for being strong as she fought cancer. In another, she congratulated herself for beating it. Others talked about how she loved the independent woman she'd become. As I kept reading, tears filled my eyes. It had been too long since I'd seen the good inside myself.

"That evening on the way home, I stopped and bought a box of stationery with hearts embossed on it. The cashier smiled and said, 'Writing to a special someone?'

"I nodded with my spirit aglow and happily replied, 'Actually, I am.'"

—Wendy Abbott, 51, Rock Springs, WY

Unexpected grace

A blessed escape

"When my sister, Leah, had to work the dinner shift at the steak house for Valentine's Day, I offered to dog-sit her rescue pup. He hated to be alone and was getting used to his new home, so I thought I'd lend a hand. All was going well, but when I opened the front door to go get some dog toys that I had bought for him out of my car, he zoomed past me and raced off outside. I chased after him, but since Leah hadn't chosen a name for him yet, all I could do was call out 'Hey, you! Doggy, get back here!'

"A woman out walking with a young boy rushed over and caught him for me. When I joined them to thank her, the child pointed and said, 'Pup pup.' The mother burst into tears, explaining that her son had been diagnosed with nonverbal autism and was in speech therapy, but so far hadn't said a word…until now.

"'This is a prayer come true,' she blurted, happily hugging her son. Needless to say, my sister's dog has a name now that fits him to a tee. Pup Pup isn't just a new member of our family, but a life-changing miracle to one special little boy."

—Norah Jefferson, 47, Kingsland, GA

ADOBE STOCK; SHUTTERSTOCK (3)

Send us YOUR story! Send to Bliss Break, ***First for Women,*** 270 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, or email life@firstforwomen.com

smart PET solutions

Quick tips that help keep pets happy and healthy

Keep the cat away from your laptop

On cold days, Whiskers loves to curl up on your laptop, thanks to the device's heat—which can be super frustrating when you're in the middle of using it! Entice him to move by warming up another spot close by. Simply fill an old sock with rice, tie the end into a knot and toss in the microwave for 30 seconds. Next, place the heated sock somewhere that Whiskers likes to snooze. He'll be instantly drawn to the warmth and away from your desk.

QUICK POLL

What's the best way to revive catnip toys?

Kitty's catnip-scented toy has lost its potency, and he's lost interest, even though the toy itself is still in great shape. Here, reader tips to refresh the catnip:

71% ❤ this idea!

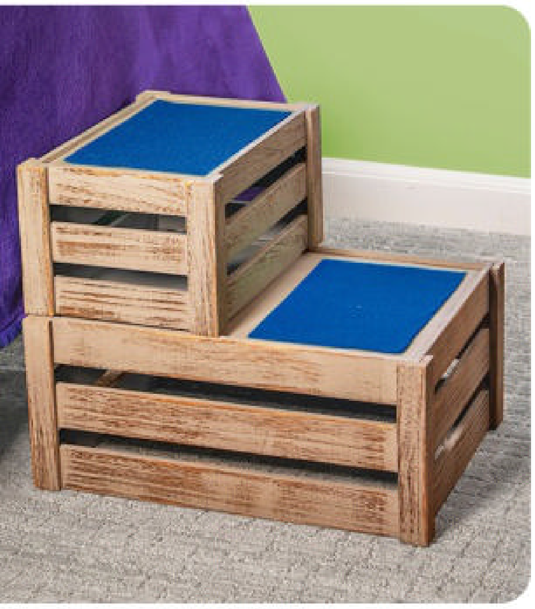
Steep the toy in boiling-hot water for 2 minutes, says Sara Peters. The hot water will reactivate the catnip scent.

29% ❤ this idea!

Toss the toy in with kibble for a few days, says Jan Bader. The new smell will re-pique Kitty's interest.

Alleviate Fido's backyard boredom

Lately, your pal seems uninterested in playing in the yard, especially at this time of year, when there's little to sniff out. Liven things up with this trick: Grab a bunch of unmatched socks, then add a drop of lavender, peppermint or rose essential oil to each—research has found that dogs are most attracted to these scents. Then, before letting him out, hide the socks throughout the yard and let him sniff to his heart's content. It will seem like a new adventure!



DIY pet stairs *for less*

You love your plush new mattress, but it's much higher than your old one, so your furry friend is having trouble getting on the bed. Pet steps can help, but they can cost $20 or more. Try making your own for pennies instead! To do: Grab two wooden crates, one small and one large (liquor stores often give them away for free). Place the large crate upside down, then use hot glue to secure the smaller one (also upside down) on top. Next, glue some felt to the tops of the new "steps." Your sweet cat or dog will be able to climb up and snuggle sans struggle!

Easy Rx for pup's achy joints

The freezing temperatures can worsen your senior dog's already achy joints, as evidenced by how slowly he's been getting around. Offer him relief by supplementing his meals with ginger, which halts the production of ache-inducing inflammatory compounds in the body. Just sprinkle some ground ginger over his food using the vet-recommended dose: ⅛ tsp. for dogs up to 10 pounds, ¼ tsp. for up to 20 pounds, 1 tsp. for up to 50 pounds. Tip: If your pup is still showing signs of joint discomfort after a week, it may be time to see the vet.

Hinder litter scatter with *this*

Fluffy always takes off like a jet on a runway right after using her litter box, scattering litter everywhere. The issue could be that there isn't enough litter in her box—in the wild, cats run away from the spot where they do their business when they can't cover it since the smell draws predators. The easy fix: Keeping at least 3" of litter in the box at all times will ensure she has enough litter to cover the scent. Also smart? Sprinkling in some catnip. The scent will encourage her to dig while calming her down so she won't bolt from the box.

SHUTTERSTOCK; DEANN BERGER. ILLO: BARBARA MCGREGOR. TEXT: LORRAINE SULLIVAN

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Issue 1: Plush Yorkie wearing sparkling pink "Party Princess" outfit

She holds every pose!

Yorkie measures about 10-inches long. This collection is not intended for children under 6.

Yorkie shown in Issue 2 "Beauty Sleep PJs"

Issue 2: "Girl's Day Out & Beauty Sleep PJs"

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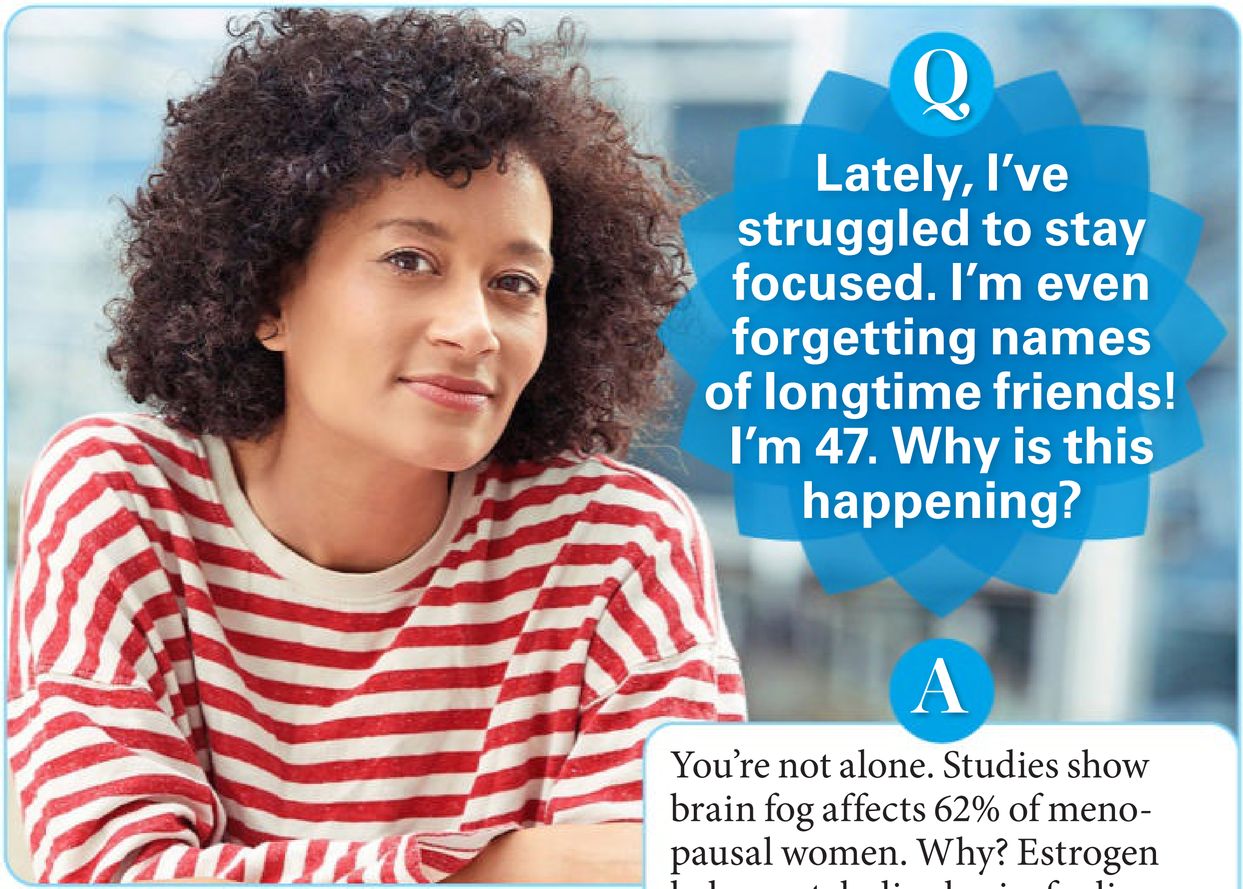
Is estrogen cream safe for me?

Q: I recently completed treatment for estrogen-positive breast cancer, including removal of my ovaries, and am battling vaginal dryness and joint pain as a result. My doctor prescribed estrogen cream, but the package has a warning that women who have had breast cancer shouldn't use it. What can I do?

A: Please don't be alarmed. Those package inserts haven't been updated to reflect the latest research, and we don't know when they will be. New studies show that, unlike oral estrogen, topical estrogen, which is placed in the vagina via a cream, ring or tablet, isn't absorbed into the bloodstream, so it doesn't put you at risk for cancer recurrence. And topical estrogen has been shown to revitalize vaginal tissue and ease dryness, itching and burning.

That said, when I see a patient with a history of breast cancer experiencing vaginal dryness, I always suggest non-hormonal options first, like taking 3,000 mg. of sea buckthorn oil capsules twice daily (one to try: Emerald Labs Sea Buckthorn, Walmart.com). A small study found that compounds in the oil help vaginal tissue and lining retain moisture, and 60% of postmenopausal women in the study reported beneficial effects. There are also non-estrogen prescription options, like Intrarosa and Osphena, that you can talk to your doctor about.

As for your joint pain, joints need estrogen, so when levels of the hormone wane, pain and inflammation are common. To ease the pain, I suggest walking regularly and doing light stretches for 10 minutes afterward to improve circulation and lubricate your joints. Also helpful? Loading up on anti-inflammatory foods like whole grains, vegetables, nuts, fruits and fatty fish such as tuna and salmon.



Q

Lately, I've struggled to stay focused. I'm even forgetting names of longtime friends! I'm 47. Why is this happening?

A

You're not alone. Studies show brain fog affects 62% of menopausal women. Why? Estrogen helps metabolize brain-fueling glucose, so overall brain function can wane when estrogen levels decline. But don't be alarmed; the fog will clear as your brain adapts to changing hormone levels.

In the meantime, targeted lifestyle strategies—like prioritizing sleep and walking for 30 minutes a day as often as possible—can protect your brain. Although more research is needed, supplements like mango leaf extract (found in Life Extension Brain Fog Relief, LifeExtension.com) may also improve focus for some. A small study revealed significant improvements in brain function, activity and reaction time for up to 6 hours after taking the study-backed dose of 300 mg.

What's causing this period change?

Q: For the past few months, my always-regular menstrual cycle has gone from 28 days to 22. I'm 46 and not on birth control. Should I be concerned?

A: This sounds like the classic onset of perimenopause. Most women's cycles are between 21 and 35 days, so you're still in the normal range, but shortening cycles can indicate a dwindling number of eggs in your ovaries—meaning your body may be gearing up for menopause.

Shorter cycles are generally nothing to worry about, but since it's a change for you, I suggest speaking with your doctor, who can help determine if your more frequent bleeding is caused by other factors: Weight loss, excessive exercise and stress can impact the length of your cycle, as can conditions like thyroid dysfunction and *polycystic ovary syndrome* (PCOS). If no cause is found or your doctor doesn't think these changes are due to impending menopause, she may suggest you go on birth control to regulate your periods.

Put FIRST to work for *you!*

Barbara DePree, M.D., is a gynecologist in private practice and director of Women's Midlife Services at Michigan's Holland Hospital. A Certified Menopause Practitioner, she is the founder of MiddlesexMD.com, an educational resource for women's sexual health in perimenopause and beyond. To ask her a question, send an email to health@firstforwomen.com.

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Nestled in the Caribbean Sea, directly east of Puerto Rico, is the sunny island of St. John. Though the smallest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, this paradise still boasts 18 beaches, 12,000 acres of national park and a laid-back atmosphere.

Start your day by stepping back in time with a visit to the ruins of the 19th-century Annaberg Sugar Plantation. "The view up there is breathtaking!" says *Mel* on TripAdvisor.com. "And the crumbling stone of what this place used to be is eerie and beautiful."

When lunch rolls around, savor island cuisine at Ekaete Pink Corner. Says *KTinSD* on TripAdvisor.com, "Enjoy the jerk chicken!"

GETTY (2); SHUTTERSTOCK (3); ALAMY. TEXT: SHAY TROTTER

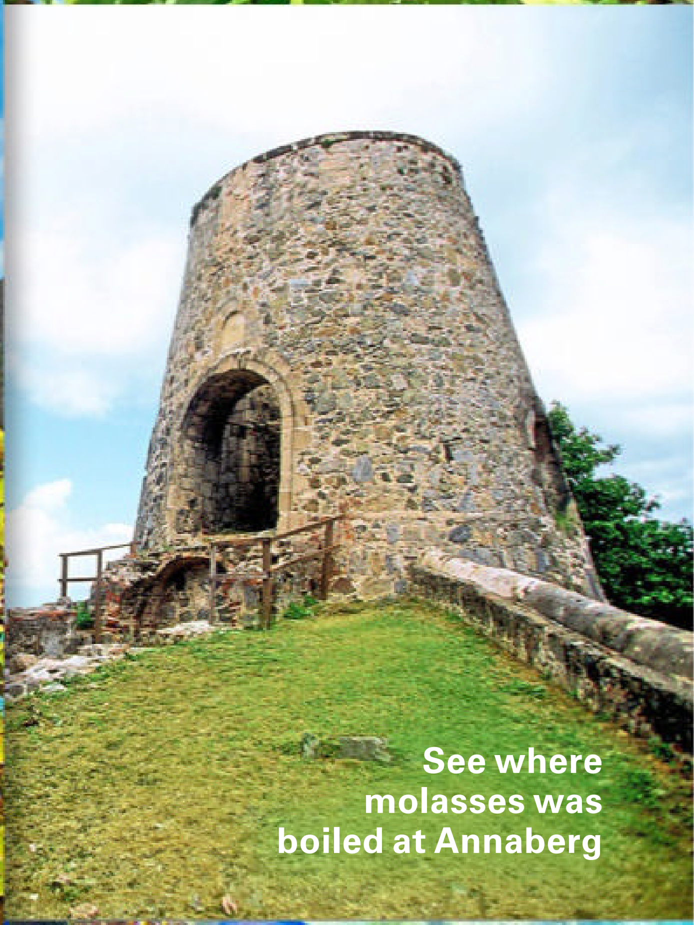
Admire the sweeping view of St. John's 29 mountains

Truly captivating

Swaying palm trees, golden sand, dazzling turquoise waters and picturesque views make Trunk Bay Beach the most photographed in St. John

in St. John

Spy the bright hibiscus flowers growing wild around the island



See where molasses was boiled at Annaberg

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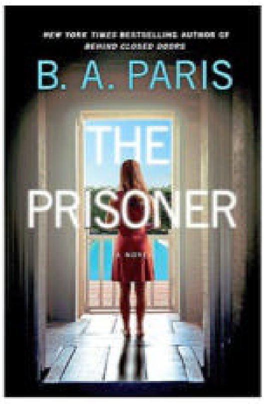
you deserve a break

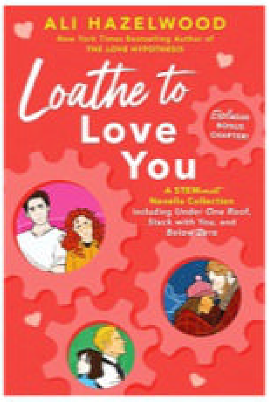
7 books we're

Thriller



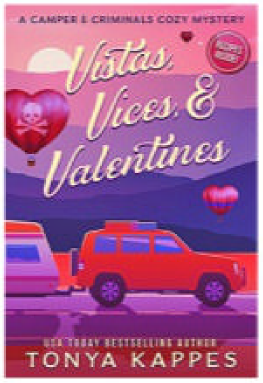
The Prisoner
by B.A. Paris
"I'll read any book B.A. Paris writes," laughs Patty Bontekoe, FIRST Executive Editor. "These thrillers always entertain me and leave me on the edge of my seat—and her latest novel was no different!" Amelie has been on her own since age 16, struggling to get by. Her fortunes turn and she finds herself married to Ned Hawthorne, a handsome billionaire who is not at all who he seems. Then she and Ned are kidnapped by masked men in the middle of the night, and Amelie finds herself trapped in a dark room, with no idea who took her—or why. "I was furiously turning pages as I read the story, which flipped back and forth from Amelie's past to the kidnapping, as I tried to piece it all together," says Patty. "The plot felt as action-packed as a suspenseful movie on the big screen." (St. Martin's, 2022)

Short stories



Loathe to Love You
by Ali Hazelwood
"After a stressful week, my favorite way to unwind is with a romance book and a glass of wine," sighs Melissa D'Agnese, FIRST Senior Editor. "So when I heard a friend gushing about this sweet yet steamy collection of short stories by Ali Hazelwood, my interest was piqued!" In this novella collection, readers are introduced to three different couples. In *Under One Roof,* Mara, an environmental engineer, discovers that scientists should never cohabitate when she finds herself living with a difficult lawyer roommate, Liam. In *Stuck with You,* Sadie and Erik are two enemies who wind up stuck together—literally—in an elevator. Finally, in *Below Zero,* Hannah gets injured at an Arctic research station and her longtime rival, Ian, is the only one willing to rescue her. Melissa cheers,"What a sizzling, fun mix of stories to get lost in!" (Berkley, 2023)

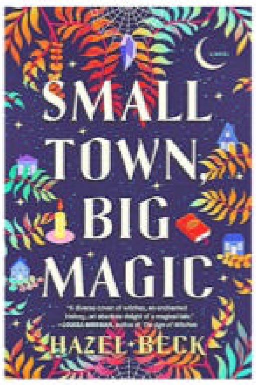
Cozy mystery



Vistas, Vices, & Valentines *by Tonya Kappes*
"One of my best friends throws a 'Galentine's Day' brunch every year, and it's such a sweet day to catch up with friends," shares Maggie Dillard, FIRST Associate Editor. "To get into the festive spirit this year, I dove into this fun Valentine's Day mystery!" Mae West convinces Hank Sharp to take dance lessons to celebrate Valentine's Day. But shockingly, a dancer's dead body shows up at the height of the competition, and Hank is hired to investigate the murder. When he has Dottie Swaggert and Henry Bryant go undercover as a dance competition couple to get insider information, deep-running feuds, passions and secrets are revealed, and it's clear that some may be willing to kill for the coveted dancing title. "I laughed my way through this book," says Maggie. "And the lovely holiday details were so charming!" (Independently published, 2022)

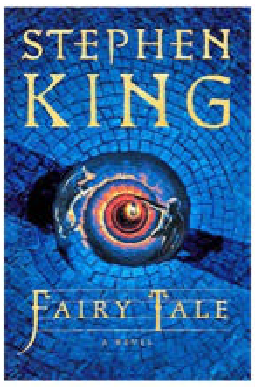
loving now

Magical realism



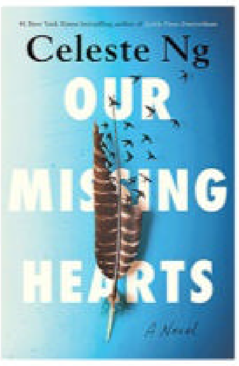
Small Town, Big Magic *by Hazel Beck*
"Once the holiday season is over, I long for the good cheer that accompanies that time of year," says Shay Trotter, FIRST Associate Editor. "But this book, with an enchanting plot, was a great pick-me-up!" Emerson Wilde, a bookstore owner in St. Cyprian, Missouri, is in for quite the surprise when she discovers that her powers as a witch have come back after many years. She doesn't have long to refine her magical skills before the town she loves is put in great peril, thanks to an awakened evil. "Not only did this captivate me," says Shay, "the magical elements gave me some of that glee I'd been missing." (Graydon House, 2022)

Fantasy



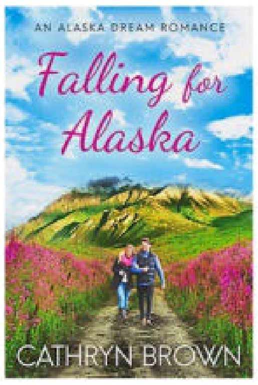
Fairy Tale
by Stephen King
"I feel nostalgic for the magic of my childhood during snowy winters," says Kristina Mastrocola, FIRST Senior Editor. "So I couldn't wait to dive into this coming-of-age story!" Ever since his mother died, teen Charlie Reade has had to take on adult responsibilities, like looking after his father. When Charlie volunteers to help elderly recluse Howard Bowditch with odd jobs around his house, he discovers a mysterious shed, which is a gateway to another realm. "This story of good versus evil lives up to its title: a hopeful page-turning fairy tale," says Kristina. "I really enjoyed it!" (Scribner, 2022)

Sci-fi



Our Missing Hearts
by Celeste Ng
"When I scroll through the day's news on my phone, my mood turns *blah*," admits Alexandra Pollock, FIRST Deputy Editor. "I picked up this book as a welcome distraction." Twelve-year-old Bird Gardner's mother, Margaret, left him and his father a few years prior. One day, Bird receives a letter in the mail with a cryptic drawing, and he begins a quest to New York City to find his mother. Says Alexandra, "This story—about life, love and the power of art to create change—moved me and gave me hope." (Penguin, 2022)

Romance



Falling for Alaska *by Cathryn Brown*
"I was looking forward to my weekend plans—until they got canceled," sighs Lauren Blum, FIRST Associate Editor. "To cure my disappointment, I snapped up this dreamy read about an Alaskan adventure." With some uncertainty, Jemma moves to a home she inherited in the town of Palmer, Alaska. She begins to build her dream business of flipping furniture, but her neighbor Nathaniel is not thrilled over Jemma's incessant drilling. Can two resistant hearts turn into something more? "With its lush scenery, this tale was an escape!" (Sienna Bay, 2015)

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50				■	51							

22 ACROSS

35 ACROSS

25 DOWN

ACROSS

1 Moore of 2021's *The Woman in the Window*
9 Minor dispute
13 City on the North Sea or in South Dakota
14 Wrist bone
15 Gets the extra point
16 *Cosmo* and *GQ*, e.g.
17 Kit ___ bar
18 Acapulco article
19 Fence entrances
20 Pub perch
22 Kidman who played Lucille Ball in 2021
23 Hold back
26 Driveway blotch
27 Puppy pickup point
30 Ball caller
31 Dads' brothers, for short
32 It comes before the carte
33 Lovers' liaisons
35 Oscar winner Helen
37 Gets an earful
41 Barnaby Jones portrayer
42 Start of the fairway
44 Ride a Deere
45 Darkens in the sun
46 Baby transport
48 To some degree
49 Doled out
50 Picket fence features
51 C&W singer Reba

DOWN

1 Schoolyard game
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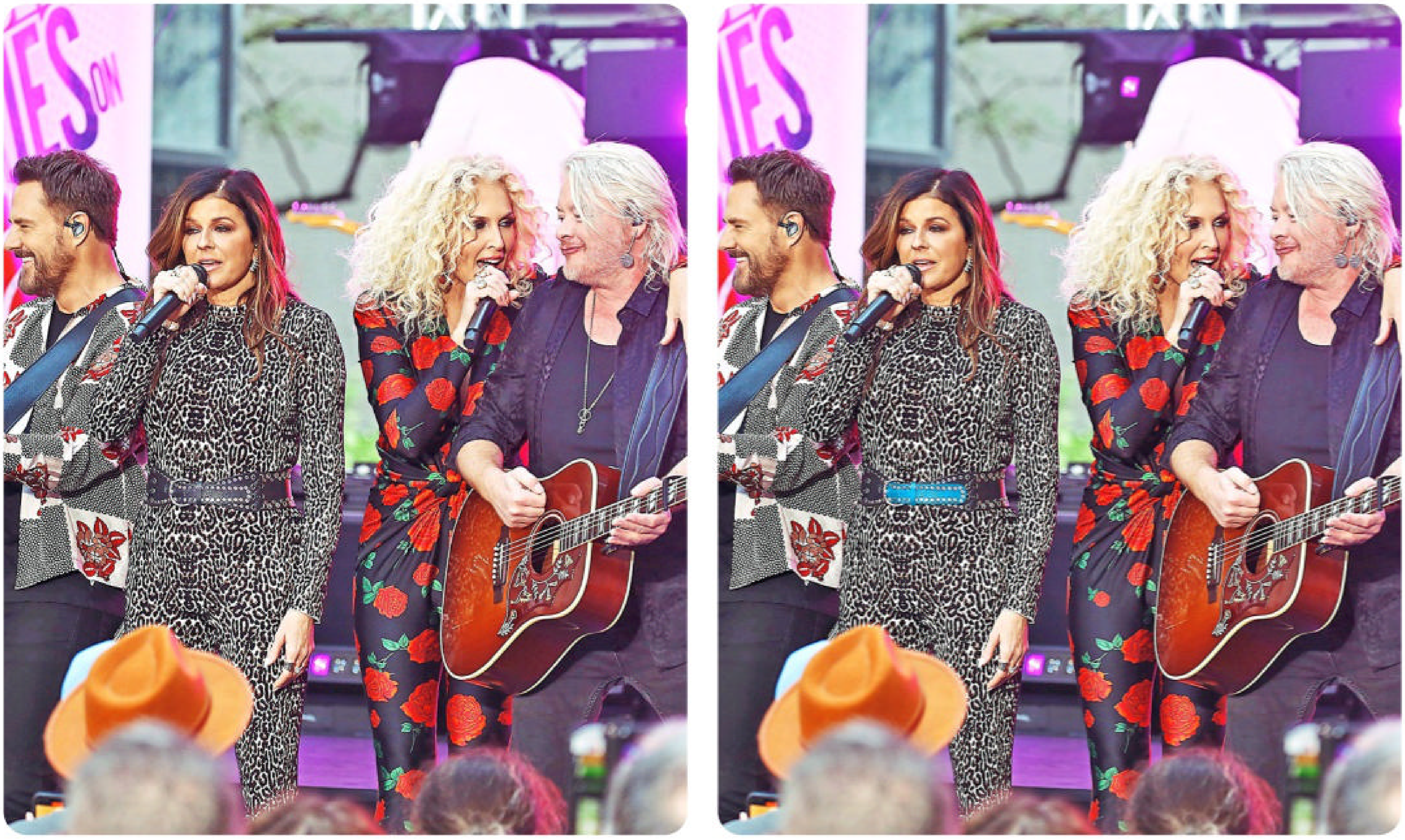
7 Brooklyn hoopsters
8 Printer's measures
9 Shrub that may be poisonous
10 Oliver Stone's 1986 Vietnam film
11 Cherubic
12 Mortarboard attachments
19 Popular card game
21 Dedicated poem
22 Small drinks
24 Change directions
25 Brenneman of FX's *The Old Man*
27 Sticky I.D.
28 "Open sesame" sayer
29 Root for eating
31 Make do with
33 Two-digit card
34 Actress Charlize
36 Closes the defense
38 Italian violin maker
39 Pilot's OK
40 Ingrid Bergman, for one
42 Baby's dusting
43 Gardner of mystery
46 Helmet add-on for TV
47 *The Addams Family* cousin

GETTY (3); SHUTTERSTOCK (2). CROSSWORD: HARVEY ESTES

Spot the **difference**



There are 6 differences between the two photos above of country superstars **Little Big Town** performing their hits at Rockefeller Plaza in New York City. See if you can find them all!

Word search

J	E	N	N	I	F	J	N	D	A	E	L	E	D	A	J	Y	O
A	A	R	A	G	R	E	V	A	I	F	O	S	K	N	U	X	L
D	J	G	S	Y	E	N	I	S	O	P	R	A	H	O	L	T	Y
E	E	P	A	U	V	N	H	W	A	I	F	O	S	T	I	A	A
K	N	E	Q	R	Z	I	K	O	E	N	S	O	P	R	A	Y	T
N	N	E	M	F	C	F	P	D	D	S	D	D	H	A	R	L	G
O	I	R	E	E	S	E	W	I	T	H	E	R	S	P	O	O	N
S	F	T	R	A	N	R	L	L	E	D	A	E	A	Y	B	R	I
K	E	S	Y	D	G	A	I	L	U	J	F	K	R	L	E	S	L
R	R	L	L	Y	A	N	N	L	E	C	R	A	G	L	R	W	A
A	G	Y	M	A	R	I	S	K	A	B	T	D	D	O	T	I	K
L	A	R	K	R	I	S	T	E	N	B	E	L	L	D	S	F	Y
C	R	E	R	P	V	T	S	B	T	O	K	A	D	O	H	T	D
Y	N	M	L	J	F	O	O	C	T	A	V	I	U	Y	A	C	N
L	E	Q	U	E	E	N	L	A	T	I	F	A	H	V	B	P	I
L	R	Y	A	T	I	G	R	A	H	A	K	S	I	R	A	M	M
E	Y	S	A	N	D	R	A	B	U	L	L	O	C	K	C	I	B
K	O	C	T	A	V	I	A	S	P	E	N	C	E	R	Q	C	S

Stars who'd be great gal pals

BFF

Meryl Streep
Dolly Parton
Sandra Bullock
Octavia Spencer
Mariska Hargitay
Queen Latifah
Kelly Clarkson
Mindy Kaling
Hoda Kotb
Adele
Oprah
Sofía Vergara
Jennifer Aniston
Reese Witherspoon
Garcelle Beauvais
Taylor Swift
Kristen Bell
Jennifer Garner
Julia Roberts

Words and phrases can appear horizontally, vertically, diagonally, backward or forward and can overlap.

For solutions, turn to page 94

Sudoku

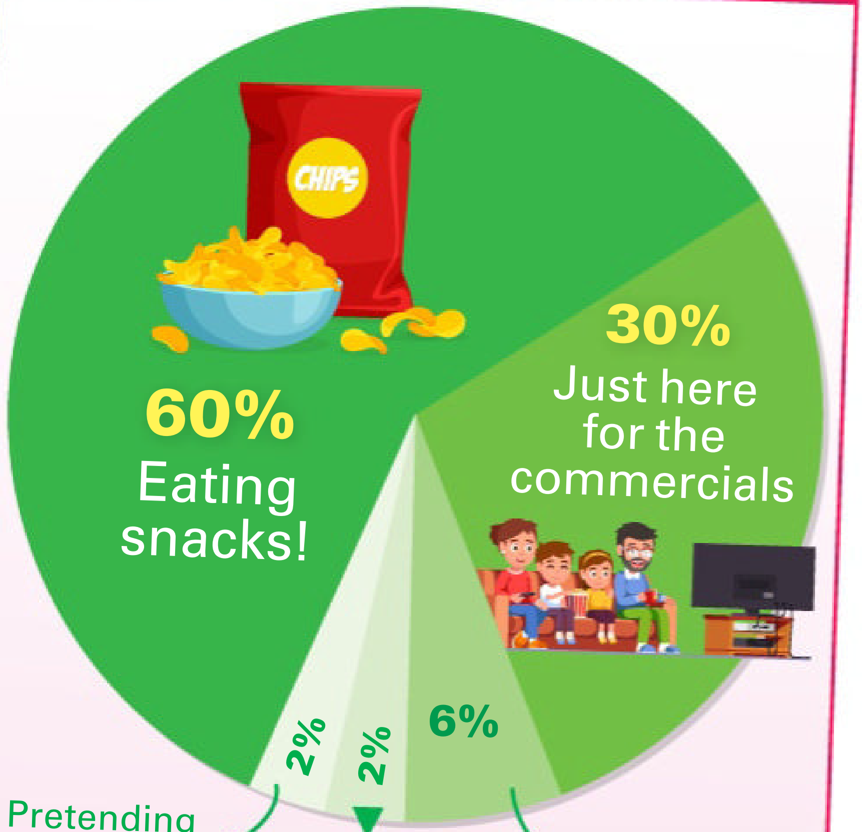
9		7		1			2	
	6					9	7	
			7			3	4	
	2	4						5
1			5		4			3
5						4	6	
	3	9			6			
	8	2					9	
	1			9		6		2

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3 x 3 box contains the digits 1 through 9. Digits cannot repeat within the same row, column or box.

For solution, turn to page 94

SIGN OF THE TIMES

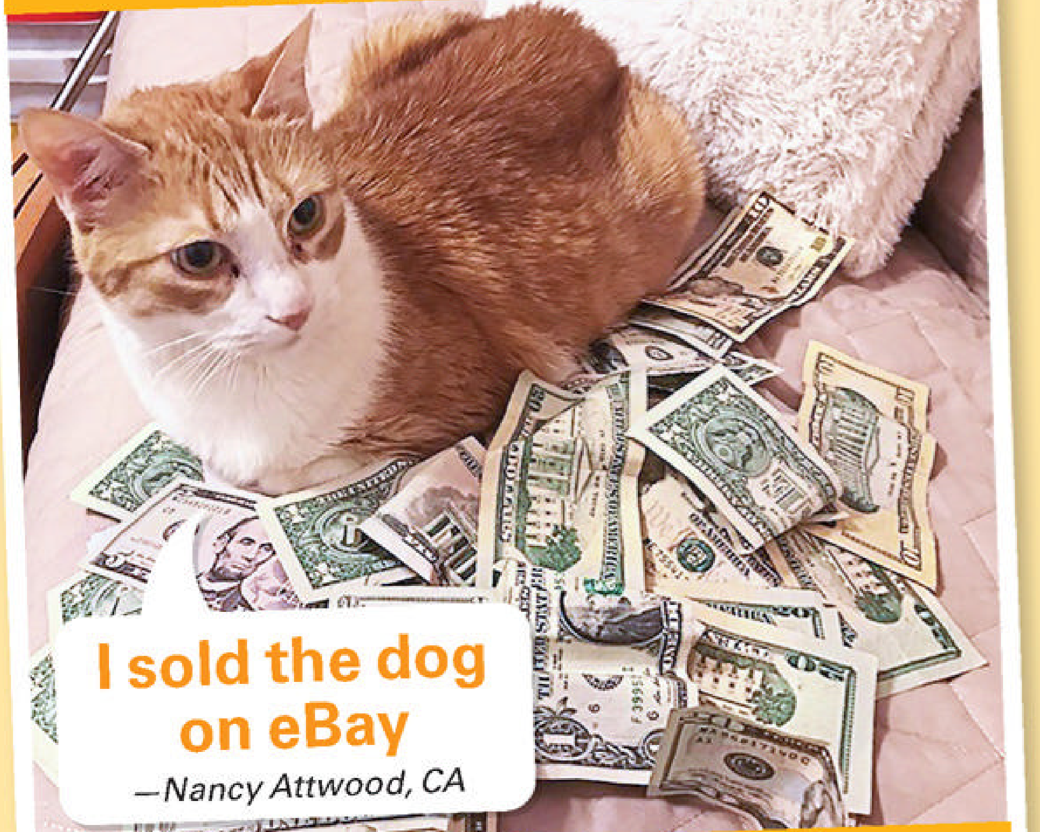
How we watch the Super Bowl



Smile file

★ CAPTION CONTEST WINNER

From our December 5, 2022 issue

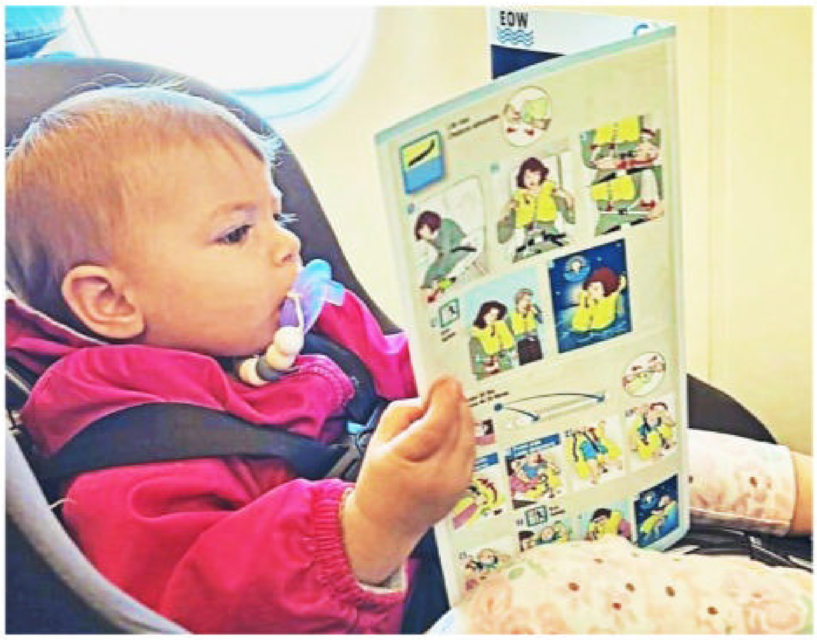


I sold the dog on eBay

—*Nancy Attwood, CA*

Photo submitted by Joan Tabor, NJ

Caption this!



"______________________________________

______________________________________"

Send us your funny captions for the photo above, along with your name and city/st, to Caption Contest, *First for Women*, 270 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, or send an email to laugh@firstforwomen.com. The winning caption will appear in an upcoming issue!

SHUTTERSTOCK (2); DONNA SCHAEFF

horoscope *by Maressa Brown*

January 12 through February 6

aquarius

(Jan. 20–Feb. 18)

While go-getter Mars moves forward in your fifth house of self-expression from January 12 on, you'll find it easy to gain traction on projects. Own your artistic voice and you'll soar! Around February 5, a heartfelt talk with a dear friend or loved one could bolster mutual understanding.

pisces

(Feb. 19–Mar. 20)

From January 12 on, you'll be able to move forward with to-do's around the house. Enlisting loved ones to help boosts bonds! Then, on February 3, incorporate a wellness practice (like meditation) into your daily routine. It will leave you feeling centered.

aries

(Mar. 21–Apr. 19)

While go-getter Mars moves forward through your third house of communication on January 12, make plans with friends and dive into new learning experiences. This lifts your spirits and your energy! And on February 3, hit pause on work to prioritize time with loved ones. You won't regret it!

taurus

(Apr. 20–May 20)

You'll make progress on moneymaking projects on January 14. A slow, steady approach serves you best. As Mercury moves forward in your ninth house of adventure from January 18 on, consider researching an opportunity to hone your skill set. You'll soar!

gemini

(May 21–June 20)

Thanks to Mars moving forward in your sign from January 13 on, you'll get a boost of go-getter energy. Move ahead on a passion project! Then, on January 18, you'll be compelled to share what's in your heart with a loved one. Go for it to boost bonds!

cancer

(June 21–July 22)

While communicator Mercury moves forward through your seventh house of partnership from January 18 on, you'll find it easier to make future plans with a loved one or friend. Do it! And around February 5, you could have an epiphany related to an ongoing moneymaking game plan.

leo

(July 23–Aug. 22)

On January 22, you'll be laying the groundwork for the next chapter of a relationship. Showing your loved one how much you care strengthens your bond. Then, on February 6, the full moon in your sign boosts your intuition. You'll know how to hit a big-picture goal.

virgo

(Aug. 23–Sept. 22)

From January 20 on, Mercury moves through your fifth house of self-expression, elevating your desire to pour your emotions into creative outlets. Follow your heart. Then, on February 1, you'll do well to take a time-out from your daily hustle to nurture your mind and spirit.

libra

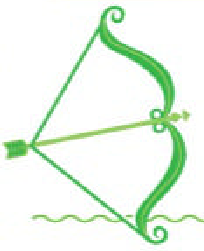
(Sept. 23–Oct. 22)

On January 14, while go-getter Mars moves forward in your ninth house of adventure, get out of your comfort zone. Exploring a new destination or honing skills serves you best. And come February 1, diving into a team undertaking can feel emotionally fulfilling and mentally stimulating.

scorpio

(Oct. 23–Nov. 21)

From January 15 on, you'll readily connect with loved ones on financial matters to pinpoint a game plan that everyone's comfortable with. And while Mercury moves through your third house of communication from January 18 on, being more social brings you bliss!



sagittarius

(Nov. 22–Dec. 21)

From January 12 on, go-getter Mars moves forward in your seventh house of partnership, making it easy to build momentum on shared projects. Lean on one another's strengths to hit your goals. And on February 5, heightened emotions inspire you to make a leap of faith. Go for it!

capricorn

(Dec. 22–Jan. 19)

While communicator Mercury moves ahead in your sign from January 18 on, you'll be empowered to share big-picture ideas. You could easily earn a round of applause. And come February 5, pouring energy into nurturing close bonds serves you well.

handy answers

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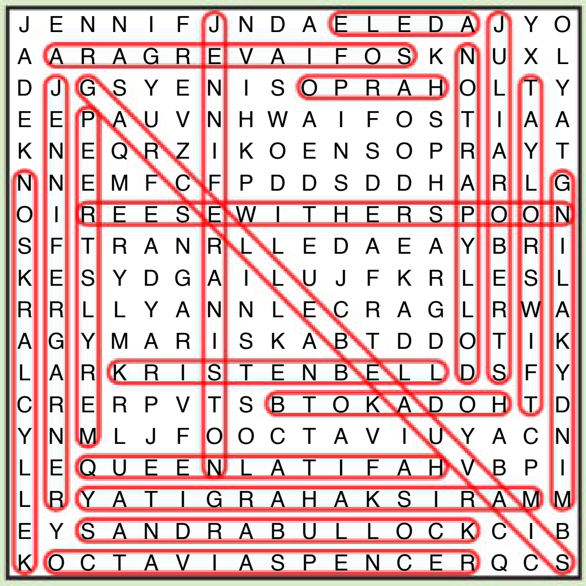
Relax & play SOLUTIONS pages 90–92

Crossword

J	U	L	I	A	N	N	E	■	S	P	A	T
A	B	E	R	D	E	E	N	■	U	L	N	A
C	O	N	V	E	R	T	S	■	M	A	G	S
K	A	T	■	L	O	S	■	G	A	T	E	S
S	T	O	O	L	■	■	N	I	C	O	L	E
■	■	■	D	E	T	A	I	N	■	O	I	L
N	A	P	E	■	U	M	P	■	U	N	C	S
A	L	A	■	T	R	Y	S	T	S	■	■	■
M	I	R	R	E	N	■	■	H	E	A	R	S
E	B	S	E	N	■	T	E	E	■	M	O	W
T	A	N	S	■	C	A	R	R	I	A	G	E
A	B	I	T	■	A	L	L	O	T	T	E	D
G	A	P	S	■	M	C	E	N	T	I	R	E

Word search

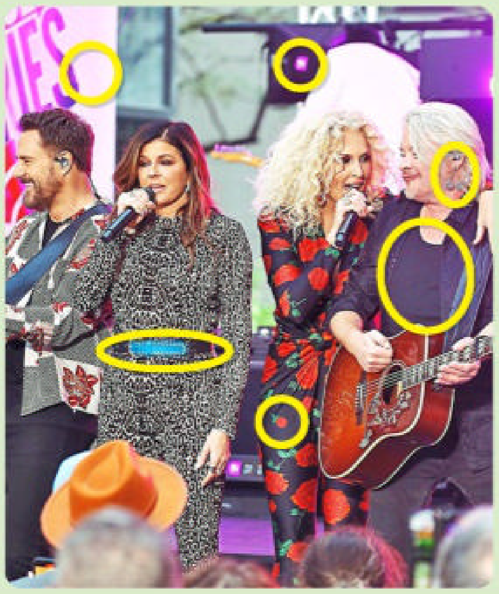


J	E	N	N	I	F	J	N	D	A	E	L	E	D	A	J	Y	O
A	A	R	A	G	R	E	V	A	I	F	O	S	K	N	U	X	L
D	J	G	S	Y	E	N	I	S	O	P	R	A	H	O	L	T	Y
E	E	P	A	U	V	N	H	W	A	I	F	O	S	T	I	A	A
K	N	E	Q	R	Z	I	K	O	E	N	S	O	P	R	A	Y	T
N	N	E	M	F	C	F	P	D	D	S	D	D	H	A	R	L	G
O	I	R	E	E	S	E	W	I	T	H	E	R	S	P	O	O	N
S	F	T	R	A	N	R	L	L	E	D	A	E	A	Y	B	R	I
K	E	S	Y	D	G	A	I	L	U	J	F	K	R	L	E	S	L
R	R	L	L	Y	A	N	N	L	E	C	R	A	G	L	R	W	A
A	G	Y	M	A	R	I	S	K	A	B	T	D	D	O	T	I	K
L	A	R	K	R	I	S	T	E	N	B	E	L	L	D	S	F	Y
C	R	E	R	P	V	T	S	B	T	O	K	A	D	O	H	T	D
Y	N	M	L	J	F	O	O	C	T	A	V	I	U	Y	A	C	N
L	E	Q	U	E	E	N	L	A	T	I	F	A	H	V	B	P	I
L	R	Y	A	T	I	G	R	A	H	A	K	S	I	R	A	M	M
E	Y	S	A	N	D	R	A	B	U	L	L	O	C	K	C	I	B
K	O	C	T	A	V	I	A	S	P	E	N	C	E	R	Q	C	S

Sudoku

9	4	7	6	1	3	5	2	8
8	6	3	4	5	2	9	7	1
2	5	1	7	8	9	3	4	6
3	2	4	9	6	8	7	1	5
1	9	6	5	7	4	2	8	3
5	7	8	2	3	1	4	6	9
7	3	9	1	2	6	8	5	4
6	8	2	3	4	5	1	9	7
4	1	5	8	9	7	6	3	2

Spot the difference



GETTY

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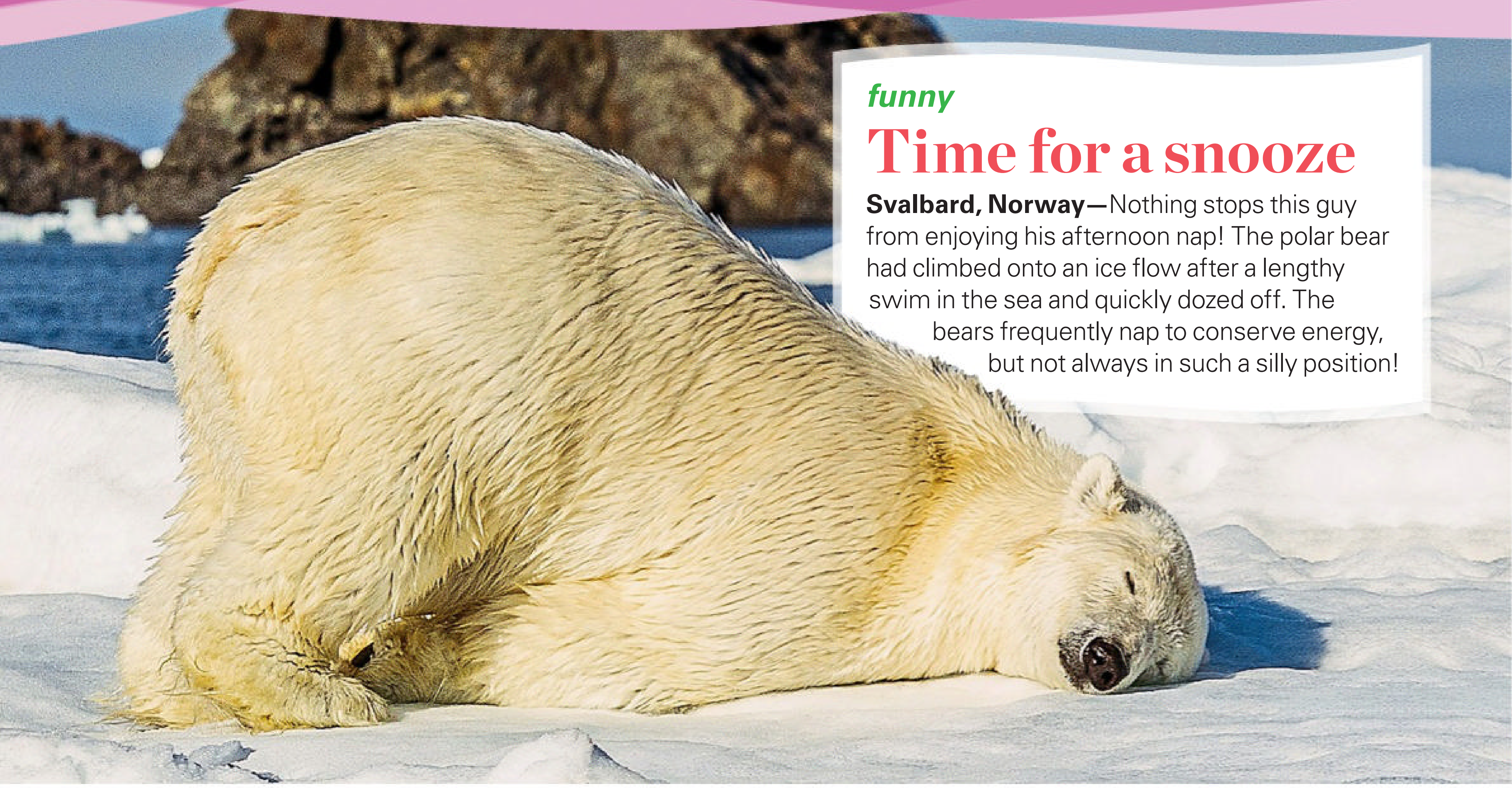
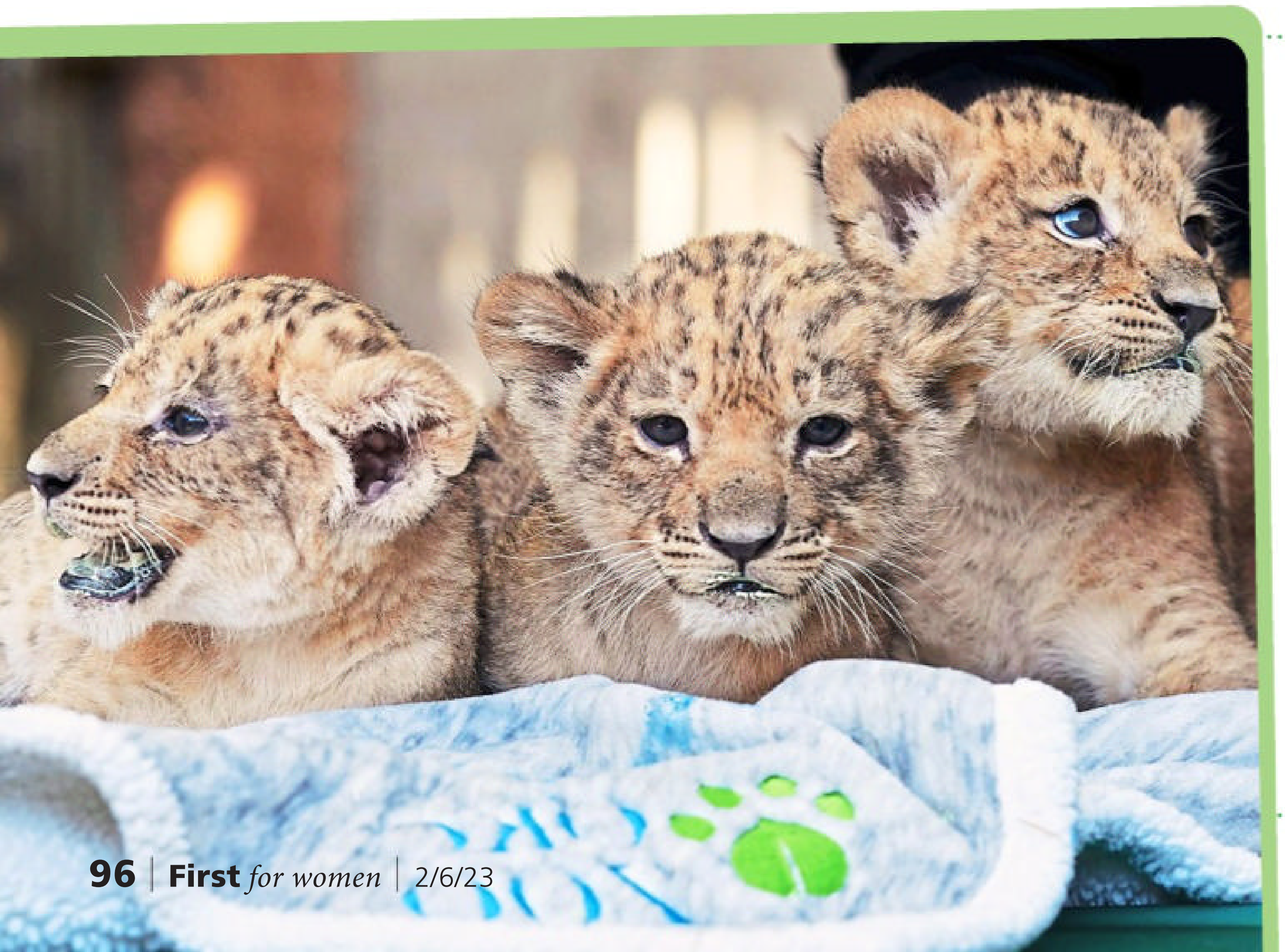


funny

Time for a snooze

Svalbard, Norway—Nothing stops this guy from enjoying his afternoon nap! The polar bear had climbed onto an ice flow after a lengthy swim in the sea and quickly dozed off. The bears frequently nap to conserve energy, but not always in such a silly position!

5 stories that will make you smile



precious

Triple the adorable

Oklahoma City, OK—Make way for the future king and queens of the jungle! These cute lion cub siblings (named Neema, Mshango and Makena) at the Oklahoma City Zoo are looking more like leopards than lions, thanks to their spots, which act as camouflage in the wild and fade as they age. Little Mshango will keep blending in with his sisters until his mane starts to grow at around 12 months old.

SHUTTERSTOCK (2); SOLENT NEWS; ZSL WHIPSNADE ZOO; GETTY. TEXT: SHAY TROTTER

amazing

A match is made!

Bhigwan, India—Looks like love is in the air for these happy flamingos. The pretty pink pair was spotted in the beautiful embrace during the hours just around sunrise. Wildlife experts have found that courting flamingo couples like to show their affection by bumping up against each other and forming a heart shape with their necks. It can be quite the awe-worthy sight!

cozy

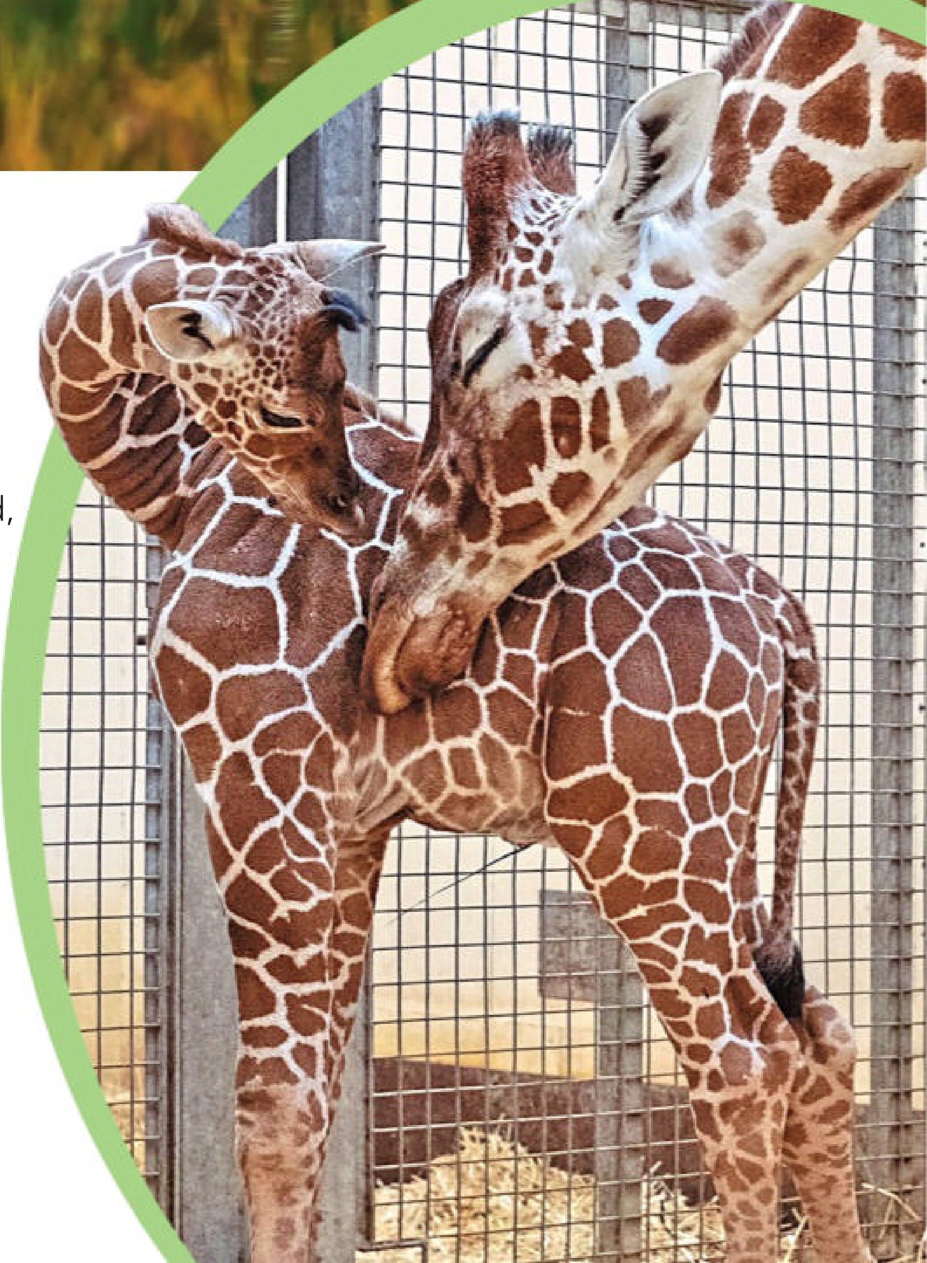
Staying comfy

Chengdu, China—This tiny panda cub at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding is as snug as a bug in a rug. After a wellness check by staffers, the tot basked in the sunshine while relaxing on a cozy blanket. Unlike many other bears, giant pandas don't hibernate. Instead, they rely on their thick fur and other methods to stay warm.

loving

A 6-foot bundle of joy

Whipsnade, England—Welcome to the world, little one! Meet Wilfred, the precious giraffe calf who recently joined the ZSL Whipsnade Zoo family. The birth of this adorably big baby, who was named after World War I poet Wilfred Owen, has been quite the cause for celebration. Reticulated giraffes are considered endangered, so every new baby is a gift. Of course, mom Luna is just as thrilled by young Wilfred's arrival and has been nothing but loving and attentive toward her youngster.



last laugh

See what happens when you wait until the last minute to shop?

Someone needs some puppy toothpaste

SMILE FILE

"Valentine's cards: Nothing says I love you like **stopping at the Rite Aid on the way home from work**" *—Seth Meyers*

THAT'S LIFE!

How we envision a cozy night in

How *he* envisions a cozy night in

Things kids say

DISAPPEARING ACT

I was substitute teaching, and a student came to me in tears and said she couldn't find her gloves. I saw a pair on the floor of the closet. "Are you sure these aren't yours?" I asked. "I'm sure," she replied. **"Mine had snow on them"** *—Carol Gee, Stone Mountain, GA*

We want to hear from YOU!

Have a funny photo you'd like to share with other readers? Send it to *First for Women*, 270 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632, or email laugh@firstforwomen.com.

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GETTY (3); SHUTTERSTOCK (2); ADOBE STOCK

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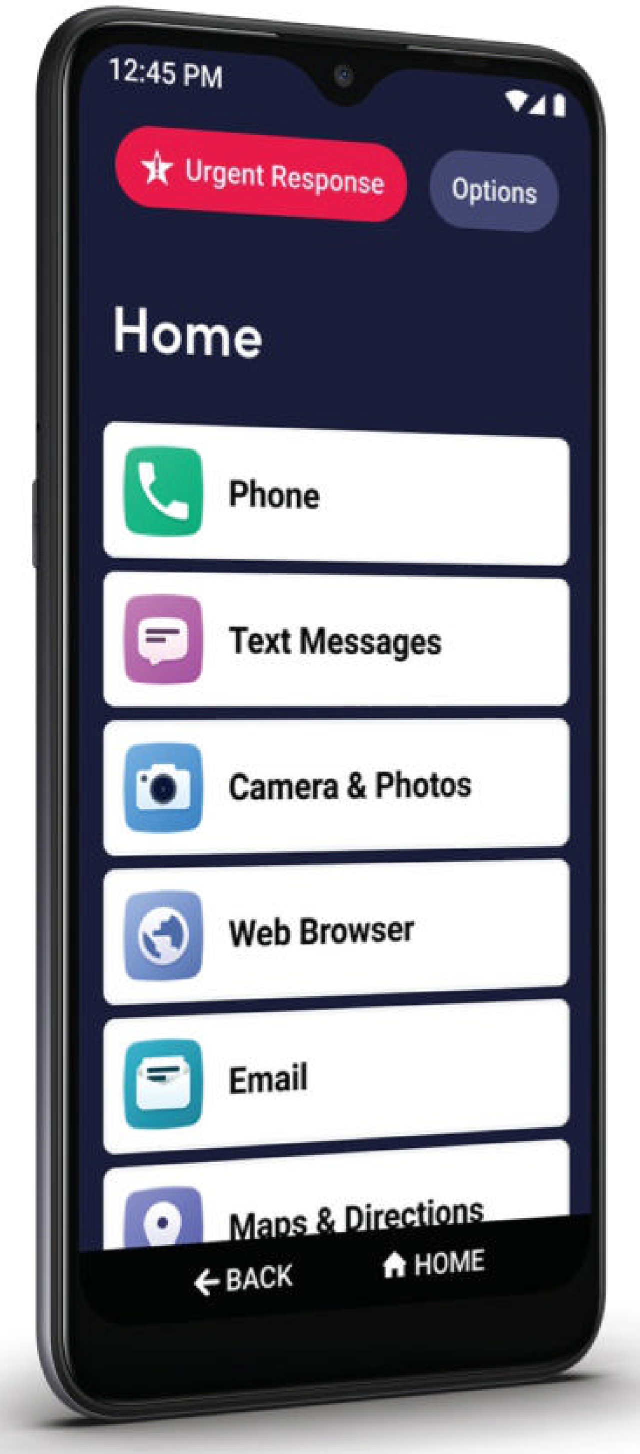

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